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OUR LADY'S LIBRARY

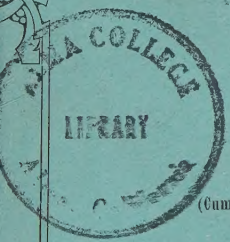
CONVENT OF THE MATERNAL HEART OF MARY

MAY PAPERS

OR

OUR LADY AND THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

I



FIRST EDITION

(Cum licentia auctoritatis ecclesiasticae)

ROME

PRINTING-PRESS OF THE PROPAGANDA FIDE

1906.

Turn on us those pitying Eyes of Thine.

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OR

"Our Lady and the Early Christians„

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INTRODUCTION

In reproducing some short sketches, that were printed little time ago, under the title of « May Papers, » we feel ve owe a certain amount of explanation to our readers, s to the design we had in writing them. They have een written with a purpose and that is to endeavour to ncrease a more tender and filial love towards Our Most Blessed Mother, regarding Her not so much as a beautiful inless creature, whose life was spent so high up among he mountains of God, that She cannot understand or hare our trials, sorrows and joys, but rather looking on Her as our Mother, unfallen and « full of grace », but, nevertheless, human like ourselves, and therefore compassionating us in all our woes and sufferings, and also n our falls. Many of the traditions, legends, and pious houghts underlying the productions of many writers, artsts, and poets of centuries gone by, have thus been clohed in a more familiar garb, in order that by such simple neans, we may realise a little better what that wonderful ife of the early Cristians was like, when Jesus had left His Mother on earth to guide and console His Infant Church.

We would ask our readers, therefore to keep the moive of these short sketches in mind; and to look well at

what we have tried to portray of those early years of the Church of God. Is there anything very improbable or far fetched in what we have described, are they not, simply, accounts of things that might easily have happened? Can we not readily imagine the early Christians visiting our Blessed Lady, or Her conversations with them, or the poor converted Jew, who havting missed seeing Our Lord, came so gladly to see the Mother of the Messias, and to earn all he could about Him; Our Lady giving relics; and the devotion to the cross springing up etc? Are these things far fetched or impossible? Would you yourself not wish to have lived then, and if you had done so, would you not have deemed it a great honour to be allowed to visit the Mother of Christ, and would you not have treasured any little memento she gave you? Thus, as we ponder over these things we, can easily conceive how the beautiful devotions of the present age in the Church, such as devotion to the Passion, devotion to relics and Holy places etc, had their origin in the first days of Christianity, and were fostered by the Apostles themselves. All the more sad does that attitude of the Protestant religion seem, which scoffs at devotion to our Lady and the Saints, and regards the honour paid to relics and holy places as little short of idolatrous. Yet, these good people, had they lived in the earlier ages of Christianity would, even as we do now, have venerated the Seamless Garment, the Thorns of our Lord's Crown, the Nails, or any relic of that Sacred period just as the Church does to day. But, they may object, they have doubts as to the authenticity of such treasures; that is another point. There is at least as good a foundation for accepting the authenticity of such relics, as there is for

accepting that of many a secular antiquity, which these same good people would not think of denying. Very few people understand how scrupulously careful the Church is on this point; no relic may be exposed for public veneration, without the formal document of authentication. Holy Church keeps a jealous custody of all such treasures, and dispenses them to whom she will.

Many of the old traditions and legends regarding Our Lady, are very beautiful, and though some might regard them with incredulity, they are nevertheless worth translating, for the sweetness and devotion that they contain. Some souls, however, will rejoice in them, for they breathe the atmosphere of the ages of Faith, and in many things show the mind of the people as regards devotion to Our Lady. The same simple spirit of Faith still exists in many places, and we find its traces in the ancient records and legends, untainted and untouched by time, but such simple childlike Faith is hidden from many in this age of cavilling and criticism.

These few pages do not profess to be, even, entirely legendary, they are only brief sketches, so to say, put together to enable us to consider Our Lady, more perfectly, in the light of a loving Mother.

Do not carp therefore, at the supposed dialogues, imaginary they certainly are; we do not think they are either far-fetched or improbable. St. Ignatius advises us to do something very similar, when he bids us in our meditations, look at the persons and consider their actions, in the various scenes on which we are meditating, or else to listen to what they are saying, trying as it were to hear the very sounds that would naturally accompany the reality of such pictures as we are representing to ourselves, We

have only given a few outlines; fill them up therefore with your own thoughts, and thus complete what is wanting to these slight sketches. Do not think you are above such things, or that they are only fit for children. Was there not One, of Whom we continually read, « And He spake to them a parable? » That Teacher taught the wise and the intelligent, the humble and ignorant, in the same manner. Call these little papers « Parables », if you will; consider them, and try to enter more deeply into the Spirit of those early ages of Christianity. Nowadays, the idea of Our Lady's portrait is scoffed at, but we know it was a time when the portraits of famous people, either in sculpture or in painting, were very usual, and what is there more natural than to think that those who lived with the Blessed Mother of God would be desirous of having Her image, and of honouring in this way the Mother of The Messiah. We have thus taken our readers through certain scenes, which we believe might quite possibly have happened, and which we think may aid them to consider Our Lady more in the aspect of a tender loving Mother. That life of Hers after the Ascension is little thought over, at least as a general rule, though in some places we do come across legends regarding that special period of Our Lady's life. We have therefore tried to shadow forth certain scenes, to show how Devotion to the ever Blessed Mother of God took root and grew in the hearts all the members of Christ's Church, from the very commencement. Every act of love and devotion of the present time is but a development of the love and devotion tha thas been growing through all these centuries, but which we can well believe was never truer or deeper than in those first days, when the early converts of the Apostles turned to

the sweet Mother of God, as to the one who could most truly aid them to know and love Her Divine Son. We find traces of this tender childlike affection in many an old tale and history; granted they are only legends, they still show the mind of the multitudes, the « Vox Populi », regarding devotion to our Most Holy Mother, which is not merely an ornament, but an essential part of Religion.

We humbly venture to hope that some of our poor words may help to enkindle the flame of filial love to Our Blessed Lady, in some souls who have not often considered Her in that light of Perfect Motherhood. God makes use of poor instruments to work His great wonders, and though we know this little work is faulty, and full of defects, we trust it may aid some souls to know Our dearest Mother a little better. God gives us grace in many ways, and uses even insignificant things as the means through which it comes; it depends very often on our own will as to whether we will accept and make use of it or not. The Angels sang and promised peace on earth, at the time of Our Lord's Birth but to whom did they promise it, but to those « of good will? and Our Lord, when speaking to the rich young man in the Gospel said « If thou WILT BE perfect », for He does not force our freewill, and our service is to be a voluntary one of love.

So, dear readers, if by any thought in these simple pages you have been touched, and led to see that your way of thinking and acting, is not quite in conformity with the spirit of the early days of the Church ask God to give you the light to follow His inspirations, and strength and fortitude to do His Holy Will. We remember once taking some friends to the Romam Fo-

rum, just after the recent excavations, under the Church of Santa Maria Liberatrice, and they saw there an ancient church, just browght to light after the lapse of centuries, which was a counterpart in many respects of any Catholic Church of to day and contained among other things and representation, (said to be the most ancient in existence), of the Crucifixion, with our Lady and St. John standing at the foot of the Cross. Many of our companions were Protestants, and we wondered if this would convince them that the Catholic Church of the earliest days and our own are identically the same. We do not know if they were convinced or not, but we can only pray they were, and that they also corresponded to the light they may have received. This is therefore what we are trying to do, to represent as far as we can the life and devotion of those former times, particularly as regards devotion to the Queen of Heaven. No one can say the scenes are exaggerated, they are indeed rather underated, for many an old legend and tradition we have omitted, even though they bear every mark of authenticity. The account of Our Lady's Letter which we give, was sent by us some years ago to an English magazine, but was returned to us with the remark « that it was not suited for English reading »; at the same time it was published in an American journal. There seems no ground for doubting its authenticity; not only a church, but a Cathedral has been erected, specially to preserve it, and the Popes of different times have issued Bulls, according many privileges and Indulgences; this would hardly be done without having every proof of the authenticity of this precious Document. We have no doubt that it would be shown to any one, who asked to see it, not merely through a

spirit of curiosity, but with a desire to increase devotion and love to Our Blessed Lady.

In no way can we more increase in the knowledge and love of God, than by learning to know and love His Mother, for as the moon reflects the sun, so Mary is the beautiful reflection of the Perfections of God. His most wonderful work after the Sacred Humanity, is the Immaculate Conception, the Virgin Mother of the Child Divine, Mother of Christ, and therefore Mother of all Christians, and at the same time Queen of Angels and Saints of Heaven.

PREFACE

Our Lady is deeply loved and venerated thanks be to God but we believe she would be still more deeply loved if sometimes we tried to picture her, and her life on earth, a more homely way in than we are accustomed to. We need, so to speak, to take her more closely home to our hearts. Theologians speak grand truths about her dignity and heights of unspotted holiness; their great minds love to sound the depths of that abyss of perfection to which no other creature of God has ever attained. Subtle doctors delight to reckon up, as it were, the vast sum of Mary's merits, even as a great mathematician revels in his science of numbers. We rejoice that this is so; we need this firm basis of dogmatic theology in order to build our devotion to Mary upon a sure foundation. But do we not also need to bring her more vividly home to our minds and hearts, not as some glorious spirit far beyond our reach, but as a human creature, the most perfect, the nearestco God indeed, but still human like ourselves? If in this way we can bring to the hearts of men a greater love for Mary, will it not be a work well pleasing to the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

Let us consider Mary in her exterior relation to her children as well as by contemplating, so far as we are able, to contemplate, that wondrous interiors anctuary of her

soul. Let us try to see her, hear her voice, study her as she fills her post in God's Church as Mother of our Lord's first followers, the Christians of the earliest years of the Infant Church So shall we conceive for her a more personal love; so shall we learn to take her to our hearts, that she may in spirit dwell in our homes; and so, by knowing and loving her better, we shall come to imitate her more closely in her own sweet simple life of love and sacrifice.

MAY PAPERS

or Our Lady and the Early Christians

I.

Our Lady after the Ascension.

The Mother of God is usually represented as being present at our Lodrs Ascension; and though there is no actual evidence of this, it is most likely to have been the case. But whether it were so or not, there can be no question as to her position and her work with regard to the Apostles and the other followers of our Lord, during the days that followed. Their master was gone; though they « Adoring, went back into Jerusalem with great joy » (St. Luke XXIV, 52), still there must have been trouble, and in many hearts even fear, and perhaps doubt; and our Lady's offiice became that of the strengthener and consoler of her children. And the Immaculate Spouse of the Holy Ghost would thus prepare them for His Descent at Pentecost.

During that sacred Novena, though we hear of the Apostles as « always » (that is, we suppose, at the stated hours of sacrifice) « in the temple praising and blessing God » (St. Luke XXIV, 53), yet they, and the other disciples, spent most of those nine days in the Cenacle with our Lady (Acts I, 13, 14). We do not know how far fear may have influenced some at least of those followers

of Christ; in any case that retirement was God's way of preparing them for the Pentecostal Gift.

And what was that preparation? Holy Scripture emphasises the fact that it lay in this they were « persevering in prayer ». Which of us understand, this fact that the Apostles *persevered* in prayer. Which of us perseveres in prayer? What can we call that irreverent throwing of ourselves on our knees, and, at the commencement of our prayer, almost telling almighty God, that we do not expect He will hear us, perhaps finishing abruptly, and when we are not answered immediately, discontentedly complaining? Certainly, there is very little reverence or perseverance in such prayers as these, and they are most unlike the prayer in which the Apostles persevered, in union, with our Lady, in the Upper Room at Jerusalem, where they learned from her how to prepare and wait for the coming of God's Holy Spirit.

There was no time for our Lady to think of Jesus dear presence, which had gone from her; she had to be the « valiant woman »; she must have a word for all, for all needed strength and consolation, and patience to « wait for the Promise of the Father » (Acts I, 4). They knew they had a great work to do, and yet were almost tempted to doubt it; it seemed so incredible so out of keeping with their capabilities and with the state of the world. Our Lord's words had been so mysterious, they could not grasp their full meaning. What an untold comfort then to have His Mother and theirs amongst them. She had to see and speak to them, one after another, to encourage and console, and no one more than St. Peter.

Poor St. Peter one look from his master haunted him the remembrance of that moment, when Jesus, turned and looked upon him was ever with him, That dear Lord,

whom he had denied, and so cruelly deserted, in that hour, when all would feel it most, the hour of trial, sorrow. At every interval that she could get, our Lady strove to comfort him. She knew how intensely he loved his Master, and she felt for that poor heart now suffering so terribly, and what her presence was to Peter, God alone knew. Our Lady would remind him of what was expected of him as Vicar of Christ, how he was to speak to the faithful encourage them to be strong and brave for, like all the Apostles, St. Peter was very different, before the descent of the Holy Ghost, from what he was after he had received the Spirit of might and strength. It seems as though this time must have been a time of great trial to them. They had lived in Jesus sweet presence, and had been strong, resting on Him, and drinking in His Words. Now, He was gone, and the Holy Ghost had not yet come, who would remind them of the words of Jesus. They were to be reminded, first, of their own weak frail nature, and that of themselves, they could do nothing.

Our Lady understood God's ways, so well, and felt for them, most tenderly and they knew this. She could not relieve them of their trial, She could only encourage them to trust God, in the dark, as well as in the light; as yet they did not realize the wondrous light, that was coming, the Paraclete.

So, can we not enter a little, at times into what we imagine were Our Lady's feelings, at this period. When we see one person seeking to enter the Church, another desirous of being admitted to Religion, and we admire the workings of the Holy Spirit in the soul? We echo the words of Our Lord « If thou didst know the gift of God ».

We may also picture to ourselves, St. Thomas, as he returned, from witnessing that wonderful sight of the Ascension of Jesus, weeping, perhaps, as he thought, that « the Beautiful One, in His Strength », had left the earth, would he see Jesus no more in this world? Could it be possible He had really gone. « My Lord and my God! » be said, again and again. « Can I no more touch those Hands, those Nail-pierced Hands into which You allowed me to put my finger; Jesus, Jesus! » he cried in sorrow.

At first, it was sorrow for his own loss, that he felt; no priest perhaps, ever touched the Sacred Host, with as much love and reverence, as St. Thomas would have felt could be but once again, touch the Hand of Jesus.

« My Lord, my God, and my All! » Then Mary would speak to him and her tender words would remind him that if he could feel His Master' s loss so much, what must the Mother feel? The softened heart, opened by love, would also think how he had doubted Jesus, and how good Jesus had been, condescending to his infirmity, and strengthening his weak faith; « Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands, and bring hither thy hand, and put it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing » (John XX).

Imagine, the finger of St. Thomas, went into the place of the nail, that pierced the Hand of our dear Lord! What must have been the size of the wound? We have both seen the nail, and venerated the finger of St. Thomas, in Rome. The nails of that time were evidently rounded at the top, something like the top of a mushroom. We have gazed at it and sicken at the thought of such a nail piercing the hand of one we love.

Try to imagine what you would feel if a stranger took even your little pet dog, or your favorite horse, threw it down and nailed it to a plank or to the ground? Or, go higher, if someone did such a thing to a loved friend, what would you feel? Dare he even mention his grief, as a shadow, in comparison, with our Lady's agony when she saw Jesus, being nailed to the cross? This is a digression, for we were thinking of St. Thomas, but it is one which occurs, when we think of the relics of the Passion.

We were imagining St. Thomas' grief. First, his own personal sorrow, for the loss of Jesus, and then the remembrance of the Mother's grief, and his compassion for her, obtained for him the gift of true contrition. He was sorry to have been so unbelieving as to merit the rebuke « Be not faithless, but believing », then came those words that rejoice hearts, « Blessed are they, who have not seen, and yet have believed ». Reader, those words are for you and for me. Jesus has pronounced us « blessed ». Let us work therefore, in the brightness of that blessing, which should gladden our lives, making us strain every effort, so that our days may be full ones, full of merit, full of faith, and hope, and love; putting into practice the lessons we have learnt from Our Lady, and the Apostles, in the Upper-Room, of Jerusalem.

Mary, Spouse of the Holy Ghost,
pray for us.

II.

Our Lady in the House of St. John.

Let us enter the house of the Beloved Apostle, and try to picture what we see there. Mary is seated near a window with her spindle and distaff. She loved to work for the Apostles and disciples of her Son even before the poor who were so dear to her. The Apostles were her own sons, given her by Jesus in His dying hour; and with how mighty a Mother's love she loved them and took them to her heart!

The Evangelists came to Mary. The Holy Ghost made use of His Spouse to tell St. Luke of the Infancy and Childhood of Jesus. This we may well believe, sime it is God's way to make use of natural means where these are possible.

How did our Lady speak of the Angel's visit, of that wondrous Annunciation of the coming of the Redeemer? Did she tell the Evangelist how Gabriel came and the words he used? Humility was perfect in Mary, and therefore she could speak of that sweet and awful Visit, of that tremendous salutation « Hail, full of grace », of the « great things » which « He that is mighty » had done for her.

It is sometimes a false humility that hinders souls from speaking of the work of grace within them. Mary knew her own nothingness as a creature, knew that the « Ave » was for God's eternal glory. And therefore she could say, without a thought of self, that He, the Almighty, had regarded the lowliness of His handmaid.

Father Faber, in speaking of this epoch (the years after our Lord's Ascension) says « The widowed Church leant

upon her ». Wonderful and perfect Mother — Mother of God — Mother of mankind — Mother of every single redeemed one!

As we enter the abode of St. John, let us reverently picture what it is not difficult to imagine. Mary's hand has dropped — her lips are moving — « Blessed — blessed » she is saying. St. John looks up from the writing that he has been deeply centred in, wishing to hear what Mary is saying. Steps are heard outside, interrupting the quiet — there is a voice at the threshold — Mary turns her eyes at the sound — it is Peter, and for him the Mother has ever a special welcome, a look of special encouragement, a tone of special love in the voice that was always loving.

Peter, seated at the Mother's feet, tells what he has been doing in the Master's service, and then, as ever, he wants to know something fresh about his Lord — though all he has ever heard was always new when Mary spoke of Jesus.

Would that we could have been there and seen our Lady with her sons! No mother ever loved her offspring as Mary loved those who had sprung from the Sacred Heart of Jesus; they were Jesus'other self to her — as indeed all good priests are in every time and place.

St. John greets St. Peter, and turning to our Lady asks, « What were you saying, Mother, when Peter came in? « Joy overspread your face, and I heard the words Blessed, « blessed. I was thinking of you both », Mary replies, « going back in thought to the time when Jesus on the « mount spoke to His people of those who were truly « blessed, and said 'Blessed are the poor in spirit' ».

Slowly and sweetly our Lady repeated the words of

her Divine Son. Peter and John gazed on her, and when she had finished these wonderful Beatitudes her eyes, which had been fixed as though looking upon Jesus while she spoke, now turned upon them, as she said: « I thought « of you, my sons, as I repeated His words, and rejoiced « to think how, though still on earth, you are already « proclaimed Blessed by His Lips ». Peter bent his head in Mary's lap, and the Mother laid her hand caressingly upon it, for his heart was ready to break. It was ever so when she spoke thus tenderly to him, for though he had never known reproach, save the look in Jesus'eyes, he could never forget for one moment his denial of the Divine Master. From Mary he had received nothing but compassion, no word had ever crossed her lips but words of the tenderest love and pity. John left them together, and as Mary's hand caressed that bowed head she thought, and longed for Peter to know, what his contrite soul was to God — what a glory — what a triumph of the Passion of Jesus.

After a while she spoke: « Peter », she said, « One « mighty Being, one of the most glorious of God's creatures, « once stood firm when others fell, and through his fidelity « hosts of Angels, with him at their head, were faithful « to their God and see Him now for evermore. And « Michaels work is your work too. What did the Master « say to you? 'Thou, being once converted, confirm thy « brethren'[1]. He has placed you at the head of His Church, « His new creation. That Church is founded to save « sinners; and by thy repentance countless souls will learn « that all is not lost when they have sinned. They will « understand that the fidelity of Michael and the repen- « tance of Peter are both works of the Most High. Has

« not thy Master given thee the greatest trust that He « could commit to man — His whole flock confided to « thee His Vicar? Thou art now in the place of the Good « Shepherd Himself, His Representative to His people, and « Wouldst like Him lay down thy life for His sheep ».

Peter's voice, broken with a repentant sob spoke: « I will — God helping me, I will ». The feeling that was in the Heart of Jesus when He said « I have a baptism « wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened « until it be accomplished » [2] filled Peter's soul. His face lit up as he gazed at the Virgin Mother, and she saw his readiness to give his life for Christ's sheep, and his longing that the moment might be hastened. She rejoiced as she saw his soul expanding under the influence of her Spouse, the Holy Ghost, Who was making use of her to work His wonderful triumphs of grace, even as He does today.

Mary saw the beauteous soul of Peter, how pure it was, with the purity of Penance, soft and tender as a mother's; how firm, as that of an Archangel, was his will, how invincible his courage. And she rejoiced in the work of the Holy Ghost, in the formation of the first Vicar of her Son, as she saw what God was doing and would do in and through His mighty Apostle.

III.

St. John's Mass.

Can we realise the wonder of that moment when St. John celebrated the Holy Sacrifice, and gave Holy Communion to Our Lady? Can we enter into his feelings

as he brought Jesus down upon the altar, while the Mother was present? Can we conceive what he felt at the mystical shedding of the Precious Blood, while the Mother knelt before the altar? St. John said Mass, more deeply imbued with the spirit of the Immaculate One, (who had taken great part in the offering of that tremendous Sacrifice) than could be possible to any other priest. He entered naturally, without any effort, in some measure into the feelings of the Mother on Calvary.

We can hardly venture to imagine what were Our Lady's feelings as she gazed upon the Precious Blood, present on the altar, and the love and rapture of Mary's Heart was reproduced in the soul of St. John. Mother, may we, like that favoured Apostle, take Thee to ourselves as our very own Mother, and glorify our God by imitating Thee. The more we increase in likeness to thee, dear Mother, the more we shall rejoice and glorify Jesus, Who loves to see Thee reflected on earth. We may ask our Guardian Angel to lead us, and with deepest humility, under that Angel's protecting wings, we may assist in spirit at the wonderful Mass celebrated by the dear St. John. Each time it was repeated tt was a fresh vision of beauty to the Blessed above. All the wondrous mysteries of Our Lord's Life were reproduced as pictures of loveliness, yet not as mere pictures only, but as intense realities; for the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Last Supper, and Calvary were all again enacted there, in Our Lady's presence. We would need to look from the Bosom of God, to comprehend the exceeding beauty of that earthly scene. We cannot grasp the wonder of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, or the surpassing beauty it gives this poor earth in God's sight; how then can we realise what that Mass was,

at which the Mother of the Word Incarnate assisted? « ET VERBUM CARO FACTUM EST ». The Word who assumed His Human nature in Her pure womb now lies upon the altar, before Her, and as the « Pure Oblation », is offered to the Most High, by the hands of her adopted son, « the disciple whom Jesus, loved ». Her whole heart goes out in the renewal of that entire self surrender to the Will of God, that found its utterance in her « Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum »: which was echoed on Calvary as truly as it was said at Nazareth. Would that we could have assisted in person at St. John's Mass, but at least let us look, in spirit, on that marvellous scene, and resolve that, at our next Mass, we will endeavour to assist at it with some of Our Lady's beautiful dispositions. If Priests will permit me, I would remind them to unite with St. John, as he offered the August Sacrifice, in Our Lady's presence, offering Her Prayer as you recite the Prayers of the Mass; as you consecrate and elevate the Precious Blood, remember that the first drops were taken from the Heart of Mary.

The Spouse of the Holy Ghost will help you to offer the Holy sacrifice in union with the intentions of your Master, for they were ever echoed in the Heart of Our Lady. Mary's prayer, united to the August Sacrifice of the altar, brought ou earth a blessing from God, greater even than He gave at Creation's Dawn, when He looked upon His Work, and saw it was very good.

There are many incidents and customs in the Church of the First Century, on which we possess no definite information, and about which we can only venture to conjecture. In these spiritual « Visits » to the House of St. John, we are not following any revelations of the

Saints, or even the various traditions; we are only picturing to ourselves the simple life we imagine Our Lady would lead, in Her quiet home, after the Ascension. We like to see Her, preparing and embroidering the Vestments and sacred ornaments used in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, this does not seem to us an impossible supposition; for we know the young virgins in the templo made and ornamented the vestments belonging to the priests, and tradition says that Our Lady was especially famed for the beauty of Her work. However as we write this we are interrupted by a learned visitor, who tells us that in the first era of the Church vestments, were not used *, we are a little sorry to destroy our mental picture of Our Lady, making St. John's vestments and are also rather surprised to read in an old Romam almanac, that on the 6th of May, the Feast of « St. John, before the Latin Gate », in the ancient Church of that name, « sono esposte la catena, la tazza del veleno e parte della veste sacerdotale di San Giovanni ». « Part of the sacerdotal garments » we wonder what they are like and wish we could question that learned man about them; but there are many things in the very first days of the Church's Hi-

(*) The fact appears unquestionably to be, that the Sacred vestments now used at the Altar represent the *ordinary* dress of the Ist. and some subsequent centuries « The ecclesiastical vestments had their origin in the ordinary « dress of the Roman empire. It was after the fall of the empire that thè fashion « in ordinary attire underwent, a revolution, and the garb once common to all « became peculiar to the Servants of the altar, till at last the very memory of its « original use was obscured . . . . Long, however, before the ecclesiastical vest- « ments were distinguished hy their form from those in common use certain « garments were reserved for the officiating clergy, and though these were iden- « tical in form in the ordinary garb, they were often no doubt of costlier ma- « terial » (Catholic Dictionary, th. ed. Art. « Vestments », pp. 922, 923). There is, therefore, nothing impossible in the supposition in the text ; and an Explanation of « la veste sacerdotale di S. Giovanni » is to be found in the statements of the above quotation.

story that we possess no definite information on, so we can only reverently surmise, and feed our love as we gaze on the scenes our imagination presents to us of that Sweetest Mother leading her humble life in the house of John; nor will she blame us for thus boldly penetrating the secrets of that quiet Sanctuary, for She knows well that the one and only reason we have, is to try and increase the love of Her, both in our own hearts and in those of others.

Let us return to St. John's Mass. We can picture him asking Our Lady, what intentions she wished him to offer Mass for. « Pray, John », she answers, « Pray to-day for the perfection of the good. I see souls so beautiful; the Divine Image shines in them, ever clearer, but the enemy of all good would defile that beauty, re-gained by Jesus' Blood. Offer that Blood, in honour of the Holy Spirit, whose work it is to beautify souls. I will pray as you offer the Holy Sacrifice and I will offer these souls that they may not relax, that they may not grow careless, but that they may increase in desire and earnestness of purpose. Ask your Master to draw them to the Banquet, that will strengthen them to labour at that work which so delights God the perfection of the soul »; and then Mary said, softly and lovingly, as she was accustomed to repeat the Words of Scripture « This is the Will of God, your sanctification may our dear. Lady repeat to us those words » It is the Will of God ». The Will of the Creator is or should be ever adorable to His creatures, it should be their first duty to strive to fulfil it in everything, but alas: we do not consider this point of our perfection as we should. How often is the remark made, « I do not pretend to be a saint; I am not aiming at that

kind of thing, leave that to good people ». Yet, what else should we be aiming at in life but the sanctification of our souls? Do we not ask it in our daily prayer, « Thy Kingdom come » and each one's soul should be a little kingdom in which our dear Lord reigns supreme.

On another occasion St. John came, as usual to Our Lady, to ask the intentions for the following morning. Mary said « there are some in Purgatory for whom Jesus wishes the Mass to be offered, and I long for them to receive their reward in Heaven; they loved the brethren so when on earth, and will help them when they reach their Eternal Home ».

« Do you know, Mother », asked St. John, « why they are there? How hard it must be for souls who love God, not to be able to fly straight to Him », and St. John's face showed the grief his pure soul felt at the idea of being kept back from his God. « How I would feel it, Mother, to leave the world and neither to go to God, or be able any longer to call Him down on earth in the Holy Sacrifice! « The head drooped, as it had once drooped, on the Sacred Heart, Our Lady gently laid her hand, upon it, as She answered, « Purgatory is not for you, who have been drawn so close to the Heart of Jesus, you will see Him, in His glory, at the moment of your death, His face radiantly joyous, His arms outstretched, longing to press you again to His Heart ». It was not often that St. John thought of himself, it was for others that he thought, and the griefs of others were his chief pain; so now he turned to Our Lady, with a sweet smile and asked, « Can you tell me, Mother, why they are in purgatory, those souls for whom I am to offer the Holy Sacrifice? »

« They are in Purgatory for neglect of grace and ommissions of duty, They are pure souls greatly beloved by Jesus ; their sins of ommission were few, for they dearly loved their Lord, but they had received many graces that they neglected to correspond with and therefore they overlooked many duties for which they suffer. Jesus longs for their deliverance, they are dear, so dear to Him, and those who help them by the offering of the Holy Sacrifice are also dear to Him. Help them, then and I will join my prayers to yours; and we will rejoice, as they ascend to Heaven, trophies of His Passion ».

Our Lady valued every grace, even the smallest, though she was ever full of grace, She prized, as we do not the many opportunities of obtaining grace, which we meet in our daily life and too often, alas! pass by unheeding. For instance, Our Lady we may be sure, knew the value of the priestly blessing, and prized it as sure do not, or we would not lose so many opportunities of obtaining it. When St. Peter visited her, he alwys gave her his Blessing and so did St. John at night and asked Her, for Hers.

One evening he found her so absorbed in prayer that he went away not to disturb her; and when he returned he asked « Mother, is it too late to ask you, what your prayer was for? My soul wished to join it, and also to offer the Holy Mass for the same intention, in the morning. Mother, speak to your son, who wishes to be united with you, in every thing. I am your own, would not Jesus wish you, Mother, to draw me closer to Your Heart by revealing to me its secrets? »

« I have none from you, my son », answered Our Lady, lovingly, « And it is His will that you should keep

close to Me, and share My joys and sorrows. My prayer, tonight, was for the vast human family of Christ your Master, my Heart yearned for all, and they seemed to pass before Me, looking with pleading eyes, as though for an alms. I was touched with pity, for their bodies seemed emblematic of their souls, so decrepit, lame and blind were they. No word escaped them, their wants were visible; silently they passed, they asked for nothing, except by their pleading eyes and outstretched hands. So mutely they seemed to pass in procession, the external infirmity of the body being but a faint reflection of the internal diseases and disorders ot the soul. God's Spirit within Me, filled Me with unutterable yearning to save those unfortunate ones, of every age and clime, rank and grade, as they passed Me by, with that mute look of entreaty and poor palsied hands held out as tbe poor do for alms. The sight would have been heartrending, but for the hope that it was sent to invoke My prayers ».

« What is your favourite prayer, Mother », asked St. John.

« Tbe offering of the Precious Blood », said Our Lady, « God inspired you to ask what occupied My thoughts to-night, and tomorrow you will offer the Holy Sacrifice for those for whom I prayed; it is your office. My soul will join as on Calvary, when we saw the Precious Blood shed ».

Our Lady was silent, and St. John's lips moved in prayer; and his mind recalled again the night of that Last Supper, when his head rested on his Masters Heart, remembering too that the next day that Loving Heart was broken, as It shed the last drop of blood for us.

Our Lady continued, « The Blood shed by Jesus, ever

cries to the Eternal Father for mercy, He hears, and those souls, whom you will offer to Him, will receive grace. My heart rejoices to think that when the battle of life is over for them, I shall receive them in Heaven, where they will be in peace, and will rest for evermore ».

« In Heaven », said St. John, earnestly looking at Our Lady, « You will be the happy mother of many children, who owe their Eternal happiness to your prayers and sufferings; they will know you as a child knows its mother and clings to her with unspeakable love ».

« In heaven » said Our Lady, « We shall no longer see souls in suffering; you, John, have seen suffering. You have seen, your Master, your Love, in agony; you who could not see a little animal in pain, saw the cruel nails pierce the Hands and Feet of your beloved Master ».

« Your Son, Mother », said St. John, tenderly;

« My child, said Our Lady », It is true the God-man, the child of My Heart was thus treated and condemned by His own, and the sufferings of others opens the wound which can be healed only in Heaven ».

« Do you not long for that moment when you will see Jesus in His Glory? »

« I do not desire to hasten the day or hour, fixed for me by the most High, soon all will have passed away, and we shall enter into the joy of God, not alone, but accompanied by those who have been saved « like a sparrow, that escapes the snare of the fowlers ». Contented therefore am I to wait, in this land of exile, if by doing so one more soul on earth, may gain the unending bliss of Heaven. The days of earth pass by so quickly, they are but the sowing time, the harvest will be in Heaven; the years of our life are as little bubbles that rise and

break on the surface of the great ocean of Eternity. What matter then if I wait a little longer here, when by doing so I can aid those precious souls for whom my Son Jesus died? »

Thus with Our Lady, everything turned to the same object, love for souls was uppermost in her Maternal Heart, as it had been in the Sacred Heart of her Divine Son. St. John, who lived in such close union with them both, drank deeply of the same spirit. He watched Our Lady's face, constantly noting its varying expressions « what is it Mother », he would ask.

« I am anxious « replied Our Lady », For those who are not anxious for themselves. Could they but see the danger they are in, The Angel at their side would fain avert it, but they will not ask his aid as God has ordained they should. I fear for my poor children ; John, they must be warned of the snares that Satan has set for them, on all sides trying to entrap the unwary ».

« Mother, I will speak to the assembly of the faithful, and warn them to walk more warily, more prayerfully ».

« Tell them to watch and pray ; remind them of how their Master watched and prayed for them ».

« I will do so, and as you bid me I will offer the Mass, for those souls, your prayers will surely bring them extra grace, the Precious Blood will make atonement for their negligence in the past, and also help them in the future ».

We can try and imagine the love with which Our Lady prepared the bread and wine for the August Sacrifice and arranged the altar. Her Mother-Heart rejoiced with her adopted son, in the joy of his heart as he celebrated the Holy Mass ; These are things we may only touch lightly

on, but may each one's soul respond to the holy thoughts that well up when we contemplate these pictures.

St. John as he stood at the altar, was a special joy to Our Lady, as well as an object of the deepest reverence, for he was, at one and the same time an anointed Priest of God and the first son of that great human family, that became her children, on Calvary. She cherishes especial love and predilection for the members of the Priesthood, who, through all ages, are in a special manner, to mirror the beautiful life of Her Divine Son. St. John is therefore a model to Priests, of devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God, and his great joy and privilege was to serve Her, and fulfil Her least bequest. For that reason he so desired to say his Mass, according to Her Intentions; he knew it gave Her great joy at the same time, he realised, that though she might not say it, that She knew all the wants of the early Christians, and where there was a special need for prayer. She knew so well where the enemy was attacking Her children, for no mother was ever so anxious, no mother ever so watchful for Her children, no one ever used that wonder-working weapon of maternal prayer, as Our Lady.

When we were children, we read wondrous tales of certain marvellous Talismans, and the great deeds performed by those, who were fortunate enough to possess one, but there is a far more potent magic, a far greater power on earth, than any we could picture in the wildest flights of childhood's fancy and that is the power of a Mother's prayer.

Yet, are there not many who leave this gift unused? They grow weary, when it seems unanswered, they are not assiduos in it, they are not watching in prayer for

those they love, and who perhaps are in such danger; then the enemy cometh and scattereth them, because the mothers to whose prayer God had given such efficacy. have not made use, as He intended, of that great gift. Our Lady, the Mother above all mothers, realised to the full the duty of a Mother, to pray for her offspring, and for that reason, she so loved to unite Her intentions with those of St. John as he celebrated Holy Mass. On his part it increased his devotion, to offer Jesus His mother's prayer; and the Heart of Jesus responded as it always did and always will to the prayer of His Mother's Heart, hastening His own hour, as at the marriage feast of Cana, at Her request.

The Almighty God loves to condescend to His Immaculate One. The Eternal Father benignly listens and grants Her request: the Word Incarnate speaks the « Fiat », The Holy Spirit inspires the souls of men to answer « Ecce », and grace triumphs in them, and brings forth fruit.

Let us then increase our faith, in the power of prayer; and let us also try, when we assist at Holy Mass, to do so with some of the beautiful dispositions with which the Ever-Blessed Mother of God assisted at the « Unbloody Sacrifice », offered by the hands of her adopted son. Our prayers will be all the more pleasing to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, when they are united with those of His Sweet Mother.

Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis.

IV.

The Communion of Mary.

Dare we venture to look upon this mystery, Mary's Communion? With the deepest reverence, with greatest awe, we draw near our Mother at this ineffable moment.

Can we learn much, or merely surmise? It was to Our Lady as the moment of the Incarnation over again. Our poor sin-stained souls cannot appreciate this meeting of the Creator with His Immaculate creature, who was also His Mother. It we dare to conjecture, our first thought is of the intense joy that meeting gave our God.

Contentment fills our souls, as we think of how it made up in someway for that sad meeting of God, with His two poor fallen creatures, Adam and Eve who had disappointed Him so greatly. Mary knew, that besides the great prerogatives God had given her, she herself had never disappointed Him, but had ever corresponded perfectly with His graces.

Sweet Jesus! Praised be Thy Name for this consolation to our crushed spirits when we see all over the world Thy creatures disappointing Thee when we disappoint Thee so grievously ourselves.

Yet, with all her supernal beauty and loveliness, Mary knew that she could not give to God worship worthy of His Divine Majesty; so, she longed for the moment of her Communion, in order to give her God perfect, adoration and thanksgiving. What a moment was this for Mary! To understand it, we should have to understand her love for her Creator, and her desire that He should receive the worship He deserved.

At the great moment of Communion, she could and did offer Him the supreme worship He deserved, and for this she eagerly longed.

We might think that she thirsted after Communion in order to hold the Infant Jesus again to her breast, or to greet Him in one of those loveable phases of their life together as Mother and Son.

Yes! far above our comprehension was Mary's longing for this enjoyment of her Love; but even before this, came the burning desire of the Immaculate One, to offer from this earth what was due to the Ever blessed Trinity.

This is different to our way of thinking, but we cannot doubt that the uppermost thought in the heart of God's perfect creature was His glory.

Mary never sought herself, even in her devotions and therefore she was able to submit with unruffled calm, to The Divine Will in the offering of Her Babe, Her « Beautiful One », She offered Him to the cruelest death, since it was the Divine Will-She was a Mother, the most perfect realization of that wondrous ideal of God's Mind.

She, with this most perfect maternal love, for such a Son, not only suffered, herself, but consented to His suffering even unto, death because it was the Will of His Eternal Father. Therefore was she more blessed because she knew the will of God and did it, than because she was His Mother.

We have thus far ventured to surmise some thoughts of Mary's Communion, Mary's meeting with her God.

It was, on earth, the most perfect union of God with His creature God's glory was Her greatest desire, Her greatest joy in life. She understood it was the greatest act and the one most pleasing to God, that she could

perform, the greatest glory she could give to the Blessed Trinity.

Do we realize this, and yet so easily miss our Communions, with scarce a thought of the inestimable graces we lose, of the priceless treasures we so lightly forego?

Let us go to our Mother, and learn from her the lesson she above all others can teach us, how we may best receive her Divine Son, and how we should welcome and love Him when He has deigned to visit us. Ask her to bestow on us a share in the beautiful dispositions of her own Immaculate Maternal Heart, that thus clothed in Her loveliness, our own nakedness may be hidden and we may be clothed in something at least of our own Mother's beauty.

V.

Our Lady with St. Paul.

We may well believe, and try to picture, how St. Paul, that strong splendid soul all on fire with zeal for his Master's cause, came to ask the Mother's blessing and her prayers for his mission; begging for counsel, asking her to tell him of the life and words of his Lord. And Mary's face would seem to reflect Jesus to the Apostle; it would seem almost as if he could catch the sound of His Voice, as Mary's lips repeated some saying of the « Master. « Remember, my son, how once, when human « indignation on His behalf had led two of these nearest « Him to an unchastened zeal, He said ' You know not « of what spirit you are ' (St. Luke IX, 55). Think of « Him by the river-side, when his great Forerunner pointed « Him out as the ' Lamb of God '. Think of the Divine

« charity, the gentleness side by side with strength, that « He calls you to ».

Paul looked upon his Mother, and the fire within him became more and more a fire of pure strong love. All the impetuous eagerness of his nature was as fuel to feed that fire, kindled by the Divine Spirit, stronger than death, unquenchable and eternal. The heights to which it rose, even on earth, were lofty beyond what words can express, and who can say how much the Mother of fair Love constantly fanned the sacred flame by telling him, as only she could tell, of the words and acts of Jesus? Who can say how much he owed to her of that charity which made him exclaim, « Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who « is scandalized, and I am not on fire? » (2 Cor. XI, 29).

Would that St. Paul's ardent spirit lived again on earth, in these days when apathy, like a blight, seems to be overspreading Christendom. May he intercede for us that the fire of love and zeal which consumed him may burn within us, so that our light like his, may so shine before men that they may glorify our Father who is in heaven.

We may picture to ourselves, again, how the Apostle would love to receive from Mary relics of his Lord, above all anything connected with the Most Sacred Passion, and how she would relate their history, at whateoer terrible cost to her Mother's Heart. So she would swell the good of that grand soul. When she spoke of the cruel Scourging of Jesus, St. Paul's breath would seem to stay as the fair white Lily of Israel drooped in the telling of the awful Story. He would hardly know for whom he felt the most keenly, his Master or his Master's Mother. Thus the thirst to suffer with his Lord would grow ever more intense, never to be assuaged till he too was bound at the pillar

of his scourging, and gave up his life for Him that June morning on the Ostian Way long years away in the future, after Our Ladys death. And that thirst, can we doubt, was at once inspired and fostered by the Mother, from whose Heart's fount the Blood of Jesus rose? For she, the Queen of Martyrs, is the constant instrument of the Holy Ghost to breathe into her children the spirit of self sacrifice.

St. Paul, glorious Apostle, pray for us that we may share that zeal and charity. We have not heard the words of Mary, telling us of our Saviour's Passion, but may that Mother teach us too those sacred lessons that for us, as for thee, may bear fruit to life eternal.

The Mother's words were seeds of grace in her son's heart. Her voice would falter and stop as she spoke of the fall of Jesus under the weight of the Cross. « She « made as though she would spring to Him and raise Him « up » said St. John, coming forward as her voice ceased. « We could not let her: the crowd was too great and too « rough. But our Lord granted her heart's desire, for soon « the crowd parted. He had risen and was again struggling « forward, and He and our Mother met ». « I would not « have hindered that Way of Sorrows even if I could » resumed our Lady; « My Son showed me the vast human « family for whom He suffered. I suffered with Him ».

« Mother, you suffered for us? » And Mary replied « You have repaid me ».

The sons of Mary were ever more closely drawn to her, more deeply pledged to her service. Had not their Lord left them His Mother, to counsel and to comfort them? In her presence they seemed to breathe the Divine Presence. Their souls burned with love as she spoke to

them, and they praised God for His goodness in creating this fair Lily among the thorns of this sinful world.

Mary's mission was great indeed as Mother of the Church, mother of mankind She knew it, and she accepted it with an « Ecce » as earnest and complete as the « Ecce » of the Annunciation. Not a prayer would she utter to hasten the term of her exile. We doubt if she even wished it over. Her Heart, like her Son's, was centered in her vast family, Christ's family, the nascent Church.

Mother of Christians, pray for us.

VI.

Our Lady and St. Luke.

We find in many parts of the Church likenesses of our Lady said to be painted by St. Luke. Now no one can credit that he painted them all; others must have painted after his style or copied his pictures.

But how did he paint even one of them? Did our Lady sit for the portrait? We scarcely think so; but we can imagine all kinds of devices planned between St. John and St. Luke to enable the Evangelist — Painter to sketch her at a favourable moment; even some arrangement with one of the early Christian women to bring her child to our Lady at a certain time — for how else does the Holy Infant occur in the pictures?

We remember mounting with some difficulty steps that seemed almost in the wall, at St. Mary Major's, to see closely the famous picture in that basilica attributed to St. Luke. Il is a mere outline on very old wood (that might almost be from the same piece as the Holy table at

St. John Lateran), cracked or joined down the middle, and as we gazed on the clearly visible face (and very contentedly imagined more than was visible). we were distracted by the representation of the Divine Child, and the present solution had not then occurred to us. The Infant lies somewhat awkwardly at the foot of the picture, not at all as represented in the prints. In the original you can look at the figure of the Mother as if the Infant were not there at all; but for this we may well forgive St. Luke in our gratitude to him for giving us any likeness of our Mother.

If the Artist-Evangelist could see the countless pictures, of ous Blessed Lady that have been produced since his time, how great would be his wonder! The love of succeeding ages and of every clime has contributed to their number; and sometimes the productions are curious indeed. But even so we value them as showing the mind of the Faithful, and the « Vox Populi » has often a ring of truth in it. Our Lady of the Flowers — Our Lady of the Lily — Our Lady of the Birds — and innumerable others — we would like to collect them all, from the various countries, towns, villages, convents. What an album it would make!

In a Church dedicated to Our Lady, in the little town near Naples, called Nocera Pagano, (celebrated as the earthly resting place of the great St. Alphonsus Liguori) a feast in honour of « Our Lady of the Fowls » is kept every year, with great solemnity; the festivities lasting for three days–during the time the villagers lend their fowls, and other birds for the occasion.

We are told — as an instance of the simple, almost playful, devotion of loving hearts — that where the picture known as « Our Lady of the Birds » is treasured, the people

bring their pet birds on her feasts to the sanctuary and there leave them for the festival. The thought of this has roused horror in the minds of some irate friends, who without enquiry put down the practice as the height of cruelty. But why the birds should not be as happy in Church as at home — (no doubt their wants are provided for as usual) — we do not see.

One word regarding one or two of the most recent of our Lady's pictures. Soon after his elevation to the Papacy, a picture was presented to the Holy Father, with a short address saying that the donors wished by it to express the love with which our Lady regards him as he commits the Church to her maternal care. In the picture the Pope is represented at her feet, her eyes bent on him with the loving earnestness that we know would light up the face of the sweetest of Mothers. She is holding the Church near her heart, the Holy Father is in the act of offering, She of accepting, it.

But we must not occupy more of our readers'time with descriptions of our Lady's pictures, we wish them to see her as she was on earth; to have as St. John had her, in their hearts and homes; to strive to copy her perfections, as St. Luke strove to paint her likeness. For we must all be artists in the endeavour to copy our Mother's beauty.

And yet, Mother, the nearer we try to come to thee, the more we see how far we are from knowing thee as we ought. We view thee, Queen of Angels, in the mysteries of thine Assumption and thy Coronation, and we bless God for His greatness revealed in thee, His Mother and His Spouse. Let us also look upon thee, living as we live upon earth, without the visible Presence of Jesus; and pray for us that thus we may be drawn to imitate thee.

As we think of her, there come before us certain girls of the present day, a numerous class, who mean no harm but who seem to have lost their ideal of what is beautiful in woman, what is becoming in those who are Mary's daughters. If our few thoughts might influence such, we should be repaid indeed. Devotion to our Lady will inspire them with respect for themselves and their sex, and if they often bring before themselves the thought of how she lived, modesty will insensibly pervade their bearing.

Devotion to the Immaculate Mother will also influence, as nothing else can do, the hearts of our young men towards the strong, tender chivalry that has characterized all ages that have shown special devotion to Mary. She can mould them, as she moulded their forefathers, into noble manhood; delivering them from the selfishness, and self — indulgence that is destroying so many lives. We find the ideal for young men in the national hymn that describes Dunois, the young and brave, who, bound for Palestine, paid first his visit before our Lady's shrine:

« O grant, immortal Queen of Heaven,
Was still the soldier's prayer,
' That I may prove the bravest knight
And win the fairest fair '.

His oath of honour at the shrine
He graved it with his sword,
And followed to the Holy Land
The banner of his Lord ».

We desire to make these mental pictures intensely practical, and to this end wish to exclude all exaggeration,

and any suggestion not in accordance with the probable facts. Our aim is to reproduce, if we may in some degree, those years when our Lord had ascended into heaven and left His Mother to fulfil her Mother's work to His redeemed. Such pictures are designed to help souls through dangerous scenes and places; for there is no keeping evil out of the mind unless it is filled with the thought of what is good.

The worth of a mother! Most of us have known what it is, and have too often taken it as a matter of course. We have failed to value it at its true value whilst we had it, cherishing and helping us; and now that we have lost it, how we long to have made more of our mother's love and tenderness. If we could only repay a tithe of what she gave us! Thank God then for the eternal thought in His mind to give His whole Church a Mother. After the giving of Himself, we can think of no mightier gift from the Sacred Heart.

Let us then set the thought of that Mother before us continually. At each day's beginning we will invoke her blessing and protection. After the greatest and best of all — blessings Holy Mass and a Visit to the Blessed Sacrament — let us in spirit visit our Lady, and we shall not fail to win some good thought to help us through the day. To picture a scene in our Mother's life is one of the best of all ways to gain her spirit.

Mary, pattern of Thy children, inspire us all with thine own love of all that is pure, and modest, and really beautiful.

VII.

Our Lady and St. James.

It is generally believed that St. James was the only Apostle who died before Our Lady. What were the feelings of that dear Mother, when She knew Heaven was beautified by a Priest of the new Law, one of those whom She loved and revered in an especial manner? Some holy people have called Priests « Jesus other self », (Sacerdos alter Christus), but Mary's mind comprehended, as none other could, the dignity and grandeur of the Priesthood. She loved them, took them, to her heart, with that unspeakable love that we can only obtain a faint glimpse of, a dim reflection, when we see the holy happy Mother of a Priest. If we were to say that Mother idolized her son, should we be speaking too strongly? How can we otherwise express that Mother love, for one who is so worthy of her affection, and he is her own, her very own the child of her heart; and yet this is but a faint reflection of the love of Mary, for her earthly children.

Priests of God! How Mary loves you! She sees, first, the conception in the mind of God, then its realization, when a Priest is ordained and walks this earth, reflecting God, in his priestly offices. The priestly powers are all too wonderful for mind to understand, but God's ways are not as ours, and He has given these powers to men, and we silently adore the munificence of God, whose works are beyond our comprehension. We ave trying to keep in spirit with Our Mother trying to fathom her thoughts, as the first Martyred Priest of the Church enters Heaven, to the immense glory of the Sacred Humanity,

And the Mother rejoices in her Son, a priest of the Most High God, who has taken the place in Heaven, assigned him from all eternity, as part of that aureola of glory formed by the bands of holy Priests around the Sacred Humanity, in Heaven.

Happy St. James, brother of the disciple beloved by Jesus, the first to ornament, the Church triumphant, in so special so glorious a manner!

St. John must have felt the loss of his brother very keenly. He was so tender hearted, but he could not but suffer keen personal sorrow, and feel, that one of the chief ornaments of God's Church on earth, had been taken away. There is often this double feeling, when the good and holy are taken from us. We desire to be very unselfish, and give them gladly to God, we would not, even if we could, bring them back, but yet there is a blank, a loss, a sense of something missing. This is but natural and permissible, even in the most unselfish hearts; They sorrow, because there is a beauty gone from the Church of God, and there are not too many good left in the world to adorn it. We crave for some one to fill some particular place, but they do not come, so we practice acquiesence, and resignation to the Divine Will. Souls bow themselves gently, and say « Fiat », and they do not know that, by their resignation to the cross God has sent them, their own souls are adding a fresh beauty to God's Church on earth.

Thus was it with St. John, he missed his brother sorely, for we must remember, there was not only the natural tie of blood relationship between them, but there was that other union, which those who work together in Community, feel very sensitively. Those who join toge-

ther for a common good find their souls knit together, with a strong love which at one time, they could not have thought possible. It is from God this union comes, and it is very holy. The friendships cemented by the Precious Blood, are indeed much stronger, even, than blood relationships. St. James was dear to St. John as his brother, but still more, as the brother of Jesus, having become, together « sons of God, heirs of Heaven ». This was the closer link of love, they were fellow workers, part of the company or College of the apostles, specially chosen by God.

St, John had watched him the perfect Priest, the Bishop, after Jesus own Heart, and his soul had overflowed with gratitude to God for His goodness to the children of Men, as he watched God's work in the human soul, the action of the Holy Spirit in forming a Priest and an Apostle. Afterwards, when the Martyr's Crown also adorned his brow, St. John rejoiced that his brother beautified Heaven, but there was still a void left. The Infant Church numbered so few, he was sorrowful Our Lady knew this, though St. John strove to conceal it from her. St. Bernard describes in touching language, how he felt the loss of his brother, and St. Bernard's spirit was very similar to St. Johns. They both had learnt it from Our Lady, had obtained it through her. They were both so natural as well as spiritual, and this was what we might almost call our Lady's character. Mary's dear self was perfect in its naturalness, it was not a repressed goodness, it could have full play, for there was no danger of a collision between nature and grace. Mary' Sanctity bloomed into a perfection, that seemed rather the product of an unfallen world. In this life, even holy people often haste to re-

strain the impulses and desires, which seem to be most holy, but with Mary, there was no need of such restriction.

Do I make myself, understood? Pray, that you, who read, may understand my meaning clearly, because it will perhaps, be a help to you, aid you to realize what you are to Our Lady. You will love her more when you comprehend how She loves you.

The three Apostles, who were witnesses of our Lord's agony in the garden, each received a special grace or privilege: St. Peter was made the Head of the Church, and the Vicar of Christ; St. John was given the care of our Blessed Lady; and St. James, was the first Apostle and martyr Priest, to enter Heaven.

Mary's magnificat, rose again to Heaven, as her son entered into eternal Life, clothed in the weddingarment of his Elder. Brother Jesus. Never did earthly mother so rejoice over a great triumph for her son, as Our Lady did, when that beautiful fruit of the Passion was enthroned in Heaven. Did it not make up to her pierced soul, for her many sorrows? There was the completed work of grace the « Beato », the Saint in heaven, clad in a special glory, the beauty of Christ shining forth all wondrously in His Apostle. The perfect love which exists in Heaven made the saints of the old Law rejoice at the arrival of St. James, as indeed they had also rejoiced, when St. Stephen, clothed with the radiant glory of Proto-Martyr of Christ entered Heaven. Ah! may we one day, rejoice the heart of our Mother, as we enter into glory with a beauty in our souls which comes from living perfectly, in our state of life, and of having striven to fulfil that Divine decree, « Let the earth bring forth fruit, according to its kind ».

Let us now, rejoice with Our Lady, and congratulate her, as we think of that first Bishop, that first apostle whom She prepared and sent to Heaven.

St. James! you are favoured indeed you shed your Blood with so great joy for your Master, and you entered Heaven as a grand trophy of His Passion.

We have pictured how the Saints of the Old Law delighted in that first beautiful flower of the Passion of Jesus, and with that perfect love that exists in Heaven, partaking in each one's joy for there all love each other as themselves Those old Saints had earned their crowns through the foreseen shedding of the Precious Blood of Jesus. St. James entered Heaven with that Blood, upon him, it mingled with his own, his soul was bathed in It. It had fructified with wonderful strength, and adorned his soul in a marvellous manner through the action of the Holy Spirit. He had the grand grace to offer his life, he is for ever and ever in the Land of the Blessed, faithful to His grand vocation. In imagination we have gone up to Heaven with Our Lady, always lived there in spirit. We have striven to catch a glimpse of that joy which filled her soul; now let us return with her to earth.

The loving hearted St. John has heard some fresh details of the Martyrdom of his brother, he has bowed his head down upon his arms, resting on the rolls of parchment on which he had been writing, he is striving to check the sobs that will come. We see Mary, our sweet earthly mother Mary so human, so sympathetic, that every one's joy and sorrows seem to be hers. How much more must it have been in the case of that beloved disciple of Jesus, Her own dear Son. How she compassionated him! God had given him that tender heart, Jesus, had united it

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with His, and it had grown more gentle, more loving, every day. The details of his brother's death had given him fresh pain which, Mary knew, was only natural, even while he rejoiced in his triumph.

How strange it is, there is often some circumstance connected with the death of a loved one, that seems almost a greater grief, than the loss itself. To this we have to say « Fiat »; if it was negligence on our part, we have but to humble ourselves, and accept our pain, as a just penance, and we may even offer it for those departed, to hasten their release from Purgatory.

We will leave now the further description of this scene that we have tried to represent to ourselves, of our dear mother Mary visibly standing by St. John, and consoling him. By the side of how many mourners, dear mother, hast Thou not stood invisibly, and consoled those who, without Thy help would have been driven to despair. We ask, how many hast thou aided to weather storms in which human nature would otherwise have perished! The tongues of men cannot tell, for they are numbered by the Angels alone.

We have tried to picture that scene; Mary praying in the Oratory, where St. John said mass, and we strive to divine what Her soul felt as She followed St. James to Heaven. we failed to imagine what a moment such as that was like, but we gaze in spirit at another scene on earth, as Our Lady softly enters the room, where St. John has seated himself at his table, and with head bowed down upon his clasped hands, is doing as his master did before him, at the grave of Lazarus, when, we are told, « Jesus wept ». So did St. John, but the mother of con-

solation has come to him, and his sorrow is sweetened and sanctified.

How often does that mother come to us, but we know it not. We do not look up, we do not receive the consolation She has to bestow. What a sad loss! Our Lady loves to console. She is fulfilling her work as a mother, for it is a mother's place to console as none other can. She comes, but we heed Her not, though we should glorify God and honour Her by appealing to Her, by receiving the comfort She wishes to give, and then loving God more for His goodness to us through Mary.

Why do we hug sorrows that do not bring the soul closer to God.

Excessive sadness leads to sin, and is often a passion, almost as much as anger or pride; it should be fought with and Divine Help implored to ovecome it. It is often self-will, making its appearance in one of its many disguises. God is the Source of joy, the rivulet of the soul's life, must not deviate from its Author, for if it is separated, it becomes stagnant and then dries up. The sorrows that sanctify are very different from the indulgence of a morbid sentimentality which wordly sorrow too often is. God has promised, that He will Himself console the mourners, but they must be mourners, who have learnt, in the great school of Calvary, how to sanctify their grief, and to seek their chief consolation from God and His holy mother.

Consolatrix Afflictorum, ora pro nobis.

VIII.

Our Lady and St. Andrew.

The evening sun is setting, and Our Lady has laid down Her work for a second, when there comes a knock at the door, which She knows is not St. John, it is too quick, too abrupt, and She can scarcely answer it before St. Peter is in the room, with His brother Andrew.

« Mother », he says, « I have brought Andrew to see you ».

Oh! the beautiful love of those early Christians! St. Peter, like all heads and superiors, was very quick to observe, and he had noticed an especial look of love, that Our Lady always gave St. Andrew. Andrew was very like Our Lady in many things, he worked so hiddenly, he played such an important part in the vocation of the Apostles, and yet shrunk from any notice. Did Our Lady know of the wonderful death, St. Andrew would die, after She herself had entered into Heaven, did She know as She spoke with him, that summer evening, that he would die of love of the Cross, a death almost like unto Her own, was that love as much as suffering that separated soul from body? However this may be, St. Peter, and Andrew, entered Our Lady's Room, and Her face lighted up with a smile of welcome, as they came forward, and bent in reverence before Her; the golden rays of the setting sun played on those three faces, so different one from another, and yet all alike in their ardent love of God.

« What have you to tell me? » asked Our Lady, « What news do you bring of our young souls, our new converts? »

Then Andrew spoke for Peter, when He saw that in his humility, St. Peter did not like to mention the extraordinary success, which had attended his preaching, and the great number of converts, that he had made. St. Andrew, though, loved to speak of his brother, and came forward and delighted the Heart of Our Lady, by the account he gave of the effect of Peter's words, and the numbers who had asked to be baptised.

« And have you baptised them? » asked Our Lady.

« Ah, no, » answered St. Andrew, « They are to meet to-morrow, and so we have come to ask your prayers, that we may choose those who are fit for their new birth, and also to ask you, Mother, if you are not present in person, spiritually, at least, to offer these souls to Jesus ».

Our Lady looked round to Peter, who was praying, « You do not rejoice », She said, as she glanced at his face, which had grown very pensive, as his brother spoke.

« You know my heart, Mother, « he said », and my sorrow that my Master should make use of one so unworthy ».

« It is well », said Our Lady, « You know your weakness, another might not realise it, and the old sad tale repeat itself; but, you, Peter will ever feel within yourself, those words, ' Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy name give glory ' ».

Peter's face brightened, « Mother », He said, « You remind me of my Master's Words, which He spoke to me so earnestly, with that beautiful look as if the Godhead shone through His Eyes, ' And thou, being once converted, confirm Thy brethren ' ».

« To-morrow », said Our Lady, « must be a day of joy, to-morrow will be the spiritual birth-day of those

souls in whom you have sown the good seed., and to which God will give increase. Think ever of your Master's Words to you, think, Peter and Andrew, of what He once said, and thank Him, making melody in your hearts: ' I have chosen you, and have appointed you, that you go, and that you bring forth fruit, and your fruit shall remain ' ».

As She spoke those beautiful words, the door was again opened, and Peter turned to greet St. John, who had just entered, and St. Andrew moved closer to Our Lady, to whisper to Her the secret longing of his heart.

« Mother », he said, « I long to die like Jesus, I long to die on the Croos, unworhty as I am of this favour, I know that Jesus will grant it to me, if you ask Him, for me ».

Our Lady answered, « This desire of your heart, Andrew, is pleasing to Jesus, and it surely will not be refused ».

We know Our Lady was already in Heaven, watching from Her bright Throne, the progress of the Infant Church of which She had been the Mother, when St. Andrew was called on to give his life for His loved Master, but can we doubt that She was with him, in that last hour, by virtue of Her office as Mother and Help of Christians? She rejoiced with this grand Soul, and was glad that the desire of His heart was granted, and as he saw the cross prepared for him, ran in ecstasies of joy to embrace it. Is there really a difference between those early Christians and ourselves? Ah, yes, indeed, no one can deny it; in what then does it consist? They rejoiced in the Cross, they ran and embraced, and yet they felt it not, as we too often feel our much slighter ones. Grasp a bunch of nettles, firmly, without hesitation, and you will not be

pricked and stung, as if you had timidly taken hold of them. It is a poor analogy, but it is to our purpose; try not to be cowardly, shunning what is painful, try to be brave, and as you humbly asknowledge your weakness, say, « Jesus, Master, I cannot bear much, I can bear nothing. wilt Thou bear this burden for me, help me to carry this yoke ». Thus, indeed the yoke is sweet when He becomes our partner, and the burden is truly light which He helps us to bear. Glorious St. Andrew, teach us that grand lesson of love of the Cross. Yes there is a great difference, between those early Christians and most of the present day, (we do not say all, but most), they suffer as much, nay perhaps more, but they suffer rather from force than love, All the world bears the marks of God's punishment upon it, terrible diseases and disordes affect God's creatures, not exceptionally, but generally. We grow hardened to the tales of horror we hear, and the sad sights we see, but they are not the less appalling, and should give us, as they are intended to do, a wholesome fear of God and of His eternal chastisements; but we will not take the lesson to heart, and so this age is an age of suffering, but it is like the suffering of the good thief, St. Dismas, before his conversion. Why do not Christian souls turn to Jesus, like Dismas, with words, few indeed, but heartfelt, like those grand words of that soul, so transformed by the Precious Blood and by those First Words of Jesus, that he said « And we, indeed justly? » Then if we strive to look into the suffering Face of Jesus, as we pray « Lord, remember me! » like him we shall see those lovely Eyes of Jesus, turned upon us as He sweetly says, « This day, thou shalt be with Me, in Paradise ». Yes,

this day, this age, God has destined to show mercy to His people.

The longer we linger ever that life of the Apostles, the more it fascinates us, especially by that great love for one another, which they had learned from Jesus, and which is portrayed for us in very simple words in that Gospel scene, where the one says « I go-afishing », and the others answer, « We also go with thee ». That was indeed the spirit of those first years of Christianity, but is it the spirit of our own times? On the contrary it seems as if, when one says « I go to do this or that » the other will say, « I will not go with you ».

It is very sad, this universal epidemic of independence and disunion. Thanks be to God, we belong to that one true Church, that teaches Unity in essentials, Liberty in no-essentials, and Mother Church seems to smile at Her Children, when they argue over trifles, confident that they will bow their heads in submission to all Her decisions for they cannot be blown hither and thither, by every wind of doctrine, as those outside the Church. Nevertheless, the lessons of that early Life of Charity, taught by Our Lord, and silently continued by Our Lady, might well be pondered over more, its lessons laid to heart, and more effort made to follow them. Doubtless, it was the presence of Mary, Mother of Incarnate Love, that did much to keep up that beautiful spirit of Charity, which made even the Pagans exclaim «See, how these Christians love one another!» It was that deep feeling of love that made the Apostle of the Gentiles cry out, « Who is scandalised, and I am not on fire! » We do not say that this love no longer exists, God forbid but it does not come to the fore, it is too much hidden away. God sees it certainly, but would we

not like to give Him glory by letting others see it as well, so that He can say as of old, « See my servant, how he serveth Me! There is none like to him! » Would we not like God to say that of us? There is often to be seen, among good people, an attitude of mock humilty, which is nothing else but a disguise for their own cowardice. They say, « Oh, but I am not aiming at such high things! » and the speakers seem almost to consider themselves very righteous, because they are not aiming at what God intended them to be, as if they ought to be admired for their lowly attitude. Ah me! they have nothing to be proud of, but a great deal to be ashamed of.

We left St. Andrew, lover of the Cross, with Our Lady, in the little house of St. John. SS. Peter and John had left him, with Our Lady, the beautiful mutual love which animated them causing each to rejoice in the others happiness, as if it were their own, and therefore Peter and John were happy in St. Andrew's happiness in being such a favourite with Our Lady. They quitted the room, quietly conversing with one another, regarding some matters of the Church.

John informed St. Peter of certain things that he heard, and Peter, lately so subdued at Our Lady's side, in his humilty making himself the last to be spoken to, glad that others should be preferred before him, now resumes the authority of his office, and says « John, let those who have the right to be consulted, be assembled without delay, this matter must be settled before further harm be done ». St. John set out willingly on his mission, glad to know that he had left one so quiet and gentle with Our Lady. What passed between them during that interview? Would that the Angels could tell us! St. Andrew's characteristic

was, so to say, His love of the Cross, which is not a common grace, and we may well believe that it was from Our Lady that he obtained it. If we search the Lives of the Saints, we find that those Saints who were the most imbued with Our Lady's spirit, were also those who were most filled with the love of suffering; those who rejoiced in being called Mary's Own were the ones She taught to love the Cross, and to them She gave it, as though they were the favourites of Heaven who could be trusted with it.

May we not be cowards, and when the moment comes, may we then prove our love for God, as did St. Andrew! His soul was saturated with sweetness, he lived in a peace and joy, more like the inhabitants of the unfallen Paradise. It would have been a great pain to him to think that he could make no return to his Master, for the great things He had done for him; the thought of the Cross, and of suffering increased his joy, it equalised and balanced it, for like many of the Saints he felt he could not live without suffering St. Teresa cried « To suffer or to die ». St. Magdalen De Pazzi said « To suffer and not to die ». A like spirit animated St. Andrew, and as he talked with Our Lady, he told Her of his love for the Cross, and his longing to suffer with and for his Master; and there can be little doubt that he received the assurance that his prayer was granted.

St. Andrew would speak with the most perfect openness with Our Blessed Mother, but not so with others. To no one else did he speak of the love of the Cross, which filled his heart; it was a secret, hidden in the depths of his soul, and into this sanctuary Our Lady alone had access, it was closed to every one else, like a flower hiding its

inward beauty: he loved to interest himself in all around, but he would seek for quiet moments with our Lady, when he thought She would be alone, to tell Her the longings of his soul, and ask Her to pray they might be granted. When, years after, the final moment came, and he saw the cross upon which he was to offer his gift to his Lord, he could no longer control his feelings, and throwing off the restraint of years, he exclaimed « Oh, blessed Cross, made lovely by the Limbs of Christ, so long desired and now so happily found! Receive me into your arms, that He Who redeemed me through you, from you also may receive me ».

St. Andrew, teach us your lesson of love for the Cross; would that we could say like thee, « Oh! Blessed Cross! » It would be well for us, and well for those whom we have charge of; blessings immeasurable and eternal flow from that Cross. We know this, we repeat the words like a parrot, but let us make the thought practical; and then that Cross, so blessed, will make our deaths, and the deaths of those we love, precious, something that the Heart of God desires, for, « Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the Saints. « Those who bear the Cross well have a power with others, for their good, and many who repine at suffering would bear it better, if they thought of this. Many souls who, now put suffering from them as far as it is in their power, would be more generous, more patient, more resigned under it, if they thought, that by it they could bring some gems of grace, to some poor soul, dried up and choked by the atmosphere of this world. They would strive to bear their crosses better, saying, « I will try to bear this by God's Grace, in order that

such or such a poor soul, so unhappy, so far from God, may be reunited to Him ».

Try, dear reader, and you will find a sweetness in your life, that you have not before experienced; and the new power you possess, will make you desire to it more. Your life will grow more full of interest to yourself, and very glorious to God, and though you will suffer more, yet in one sense you may be said to suffer less; because in your pain you will have that peace, which the world can neither give or take away.

Draw, like St. Andrew, close to our Lady, look up into that lovely face, so beautiful, that we are told St. Dionysius the Aeropagite said he would have taken her for a goddess, if faith had not taught him differently. As we gaze upon Mary, let us think that it was the Cross that gave Her Her beauty, She was its choisest fruit, inasmuch as through the Precious Blood, shed on that cross, She was preserved from the stain of sin, and though her correspondence with Her wonderful graces, obtained those gifts She bestows upon others. Her Immaculate Conception, was God's gift to her. Her sorrows were Her own gift to God. So, in our degree, it is with us; God gives us wonderful gifts, they are as the outpouring of His Being, for there is nothing more Godlike than to give, but if we would give gifts to God, we must suffer, like Our Lady, for that is our own gift to God, and if we truly love Him, who has so loved us, we shall be glad to offer Him what we have, for love is shown by the interchange of gifts. Give then, generously, what God asks of you, and then, perhaps, very humbly, and under obedience you can offer Him some extra little gifts in the shape of penances and austerities, undertaken by the advice of a wise and prudent director.

Shall we cease our talks with you, dear Reader, now we mention the word Penance? Will you put the book aside, as tiresome? I almost fear so, but for love of the perfection of your soul, I must add a few more words. If there is one fallacy, one delusion more wide spread than another, or more dangerous, it is the idea that, in this 20th century no one can do Penance. This is the reason why so many in the present day, are so different to the early Christians, for they lack that beautiful spirit of penance. In this world of ours there are many other worlds as it were, and there is one, which is little known, and where few enter. It is a venerable Sanctuary, guarded by Angels, where the evil one enters not. God's Spirit breathes there, and none know its sweetness but those who have entered there, and they are very few; but when they come forth they are laden with graces which they can hardly describe, and others ridicule them, when they endeavour to explain what they have found there; but they heed not, for they say with the Apostle, « God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of my Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified to me, and I to the world ». This sanctuary, of which we speak, and which is guarded by Angels, is the sanctuary of penance, humble Penance, not the effect of self, but the off-spring of God's Will. This is the penance which causes the Angels to rejoice, and is the thing by which in our present state, we can give the greatest glory to God.

Having touched upon this subject, we will leave to the Guardian Angel of those who read to enlighten you on it, and to teach you why they rejoice more over one sinner; doing penance, than over the Ninety-Nine just who need not Penance.

IX.

Our Lady and St. Thomas.

Let us imagine that we see Our Lady, deeply engrossed in conversation with one of the Apostles; if we listen to Her words we shall soon know who it is.

« You are anxiously looking forward to the time when you can depart for far off lands, are you not? You are longing to carry the Gospel to those who have never heard of your Divine Master. The Holy Spirit has indeed worked in your soul, and you have corresponded to His inspirations ».

« Mother », said St. Thomas, for it was he, « I long to tell those, who know Him not of the beauty and love of our Lord and Master. I want them to know of that Blessing He bestowed on those who have believed, even though they have not seen; I want to tell them that it is greater than the one that I myself received, I, who would not believe until I had seen », and a look of pain shot over his face as he spoke Our Lady saw it, and it touched Her compassionate Maternal Heart. « Thomas », She said, with unutterable sweetness in Her voice, « Do not be discouraged, or think that by our momentary incredulity you have lost one iota of the love of your Master's Heart. Did it not bring you a fresh blessing from the Lips of your Loved Lord? This very finger that I touch », and She laid Her hand on the finger that had been placed in the print of the nails, « this very finger will be an additional glory to you in Heaven, and your name will go down to posterity as a witness to the truth of your Lord's Resurrection; that hand which was

placed in the Wounded side will be an object of veneration, until the end of time ».

Tears had risen to the eyes of St. Thomas, for in the presence of Our Lady the Apostles were as unrestrained as children, for they felt she knew and understood them, as none other could.

« Mother », said St. Thomas, « I cannot tell you how often, both by day and night I have felt remorse for my want of faith ».

« Be at peace », Our Lady answered, gently, « Your momentary weakness will be the means of strenghtening the faith in the souls of others, and the failures and infirmities of human nature, when they are repented of, give God a fresh glory, by showing forth His Mercy, His Compassion, and His Pity. The world we live in is a wondrous world, it is not understood by many, or when poor human nature begins to realise, a little, how much glory it can give God, it seems almost beside itself. The world at large cannot undestand this even, in this, Christ's Infant Church, we hear expressions used, that would almost stagger the faith of weaker souls. Only yesterday, a young Philospher left me saying ». I can make more of God, and I will make more of Him », such an expression would not be understood by most, nay would even scandalise many ».

« I understand, Mother », said St. Thomas eagerly, « I can understand the words of the young Christian; my fall and want of faith brought forth a new or, so to say, exhibited, a greater beauty of God, and I can realise that one may almost rejoice in one's infirmities, as a means of giving Him a greater Glory ».

« It is true », said Our Lady, « The Mercy of God

is above all His works, He loves to show Mercy, it lights up the darkest spots, it brightens and beautifies them, and the apparently strange remark of our young neophyte has much meaning, for the faults of men, when repented of, bring into brighter relief the magnificent operations of God's Grace. The Heavens show relief forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His Hands. You, Thomas, who have seen, will go to the nations who have not, and tell them of the Blessing, their Saviour left them; Blessed are they who have not seen, but have believed ».

As they were speaking a light knock came to the door, « May I enter », asked a voice, and a young catechumen looked in, rather timidly. Our Ladys smile encouraged him, for in Her presence all were sure of welcome. « Lady », he said, with a respectful gesture, « I heard that Thomas, the apostle so favoured by Our Saviour, after His Resurrection was here, bidding you farewell, before he left for distant lands to preach the Gospel, and if you permit me I would see him ere he depart ». St. Thomas turned, and the youth approached and took his hand and kissed it, and Our Lady whispered quietly to St. Thomas, in a language the young Catechumen did not understand, « You see Thomas, how your fault has also in this case produced an increase of Faith ». St. Thomas's humility made him withdraw his hand quickly, and place the hand of the young Christian, in that of our Blessed Lady; « It is the Mother of God », he said, « It is the Mother of Jesns, who held Him in her arms and pressed Him to her breast, the Mother of Jesus who walked with Him, who stood at the foot of the Cross, as he shed His Blood for us, it is the Mother who has loved

us more than our Mothers ever could ». The youth bent and kissed Our Lady's hand, and then she said to St. Thomas ». Go, my son, with him, there may be something that he desires to speak with you upon in secret ».

Somewhat loth as he was to leave Our Lady, St. Thomas followed the youth from the room, and when they were out of Our Lady's hearing. he said « But why did you salute me, before you had saluted the Mother of Christ, who before all else that live or who have lived or will live deserves to be honoured? »

St. Thomas spoke warmly as was his wont, when his impetuous nature was deeply moved, and the young man coloured, « Forgive me, Master », he said, « Forgive me Apostle of Christ, I have travelled from afar, and when I first heard the report that Jesus Christ who was crucified, had risen again, I did not believe; then I heard of you, and of what you had said and how the Messias had allowed you to put your finger into the wounds; then I believed, and longed to see the one through whose incredulity, I had obtained Faith ».

St. Thomas caught his breath, and murmured, « Marvellous are Thy ways, O God of Abraham and Isaac, Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ ».

Timidly St. Thomas held out his hand, the man took it and again pressed it to his lips, repeating almost the same words that he himself had used when Our Lord, in his wonderful condescension, allowed Him to put his finger into the wound of the Sacred Hand; we have spoken elsewhere of the great nail which caused the wound and which is still so reverently preserved in Rome, and we can realise more easily, as we look at it, what a deep wound it could inflict. In some of his writings Father

Faber says * that one of the things that show the tenderness of our Lord's love for us, is the fact that He has retained the impress of His Sacred Wounds, in His glorified Body, so that even in Heaven they are ever mutely pleading for us, and bear witness to the end of time of the love He bore His Church. Alas we are so unwilling to bear anything in our bodies, either pain or sickness, or to inflict any wound upon ourselves, to show our love for Him, and to make some return for His.

It was not so with the Apostles; Scripture clearly shows us the grand spirit which animated them, when it says they went away rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake.

How different is this attitude of cheerful suffering from that of the present age! Yet we should be one in spirit as in faith, with the first ages of the Church. According to the revelations of some of the Saints, we are to expect some saints, so wonderful in sanctity, that they will eclipse the others as the Cedars of Lebanon outgrow the little shrubs. They are to glorify the Sacred Humanity, in a way so marvellous, that they will put to shame still more the malice of the evil one, who deceived and corrupted the two immaculate beings, Adam and Eve, whom God first created. This is what we read in the writings of holy souls, and they tell us too, that these saints, who are to come before the end of the world, like all other great graces are to come to us through Mary. Praise be to Jesus for His great mercy, we thank Him for those who are to come after, and who will give Him so much glory; would indeed that we could be of the number!

Let us return to St. Thomas, whom we left with the

(*) (The Blessed Sacrament Book IV. Section V.).

young Catechumen, and who is apologising for having saluted him, before Our Lady.

I hear, « he said », That you are departing, speedily, and they tell me that the Blessed Mother of Christ always remains here, therefore it is that I sought you, as I feared I might never have the chance of seeing you again. You were the cause of my receiving the faith, and I longed to meet you and venerate the hand that Christ had so favoured ». He held the hand still in his, and kissed it again and again, Pause a moment, you who read, and breathe a prayer to your Guardian Angel. If you are a member of the true Church, you may have friends who have not received that grace, may then some of our simple thoughts aid you to give an answer for the Hope that is in you Let us think how Catholics are scoffed at for their reverence for Relics, their veneration for holy places and things; yet is it not the most natural thing? We have drawn a mental picture of the young Christian coming to see St. Thomas; is it an impossible idea? Would we not have done the same had it been possible? We should have hastened to visit that wonderful man, who had been so honoured by the Risen Lord, nay, we would not hesitate to travel, even long distances, and would count it nothing, if we were accorded such a favour. If we read the annals and ancient traditions of the Church, we shall see that many things that they did then, we do now; is it anything extraordinary to imagine that they did then the same things that we do now?

Thanks be to God that we are members of His great, glorious Church. We look pitifully out of our harbour of safety, mourning over our separated brethren, even as those in a life-boat, look at those who are drowning, they

approach them, and long to save them. The tide of life carries numbers of souls towards the shores of Eternity, who have been driven about by every wind of doctrine. « Save them, O God! » we cry, and yet we might also use the cry of the captain of a sinking ship, in the last extremity, to his crew, « Men, save yourselves ».

Souls, we cry, so dear to the Sacred Heart, save yourselves, for God will not save you without your own will. It is the key which can open to you the treasures of His Mercy. We have to unite our wills to His, there are so many who know His will, but hesitate to carry it out, because they dread to pain others. Ah! Save yourselves, first of all, give up everything that holds you back, and then you will be enabled to save those dear ones who cling to you. Sad are the sights seen all around, souls asking wearily, « Where is truth, what is truth? » The scene in the life of that unfortunate man, who condemned his Creator to death, exemplifies the state of many minds. « What is truth? » he asked, when Truth Incarnate stood before him; so asks the world to-day, as it gazes on the Church of God, the veritable Ark of the Covenant. It possesses the Words of infallible Truth, how could it be otherwise, without belying the Words of its Divine Founder, « The Gates of Hell shall never prevail against it? »

Is there one among the many so-called churches, which puts forth such a claim, as that of being an infallible leader? We know there is only One that does make any such claim, because it is the only one that can do so. It has ever done so, since the time when St. Peter, was appointed Christ's anointed Vicar, and in all humility, but with the full consciousness of his power, took his place as such, and spoke at the Council of Jerusalem, « It has seemed

good to the Holy Ghost and to us– » (Acts cap. XV, 28) Listen then to the voice of the Church which truly is the voice of God, do not lose the grace God gives you. You have many helps, you cannot deny it; He will show you His Will for you if you seek it with humble prayer, if you are conscientious and act up to your principles, but not if you only ask. « What is Truth? » without seeking to find it from those whom God has sent to teach you; then indeed will the loss of your immortal souls lie at your own door.

St. Thomas, intercede for those who are now in doubt, and come to their aid. God Himself will surely help those who are in earnest. Approach, then, souls redeemed by the Blood of Jesus, take the Sacred Hand He holds out to you, come close to His side, to His Sacred Heart and feel its throbs of love, love for you, longing for your salvation desiring it far far more than you yourselves do, « Come », the sweet voice of Jesus calls. Be not like Pontius Pilate, asking « What is Truth? » and then going forth to condemn your Lord. Perhaps at this moment Christ is making a strong appeal to your souls; some may not want to exert themselves, others may shrink from knowing the truth, because of the sacrifices it may entail, and others, – Oh! happy ones –, rejoice to give up all else to do the will of God. Great indeed will be their rejoicing, in the day of Recompense. They loved their God, and would lay down their lives for Him and for His church; they had humility and generosity, and have not asked « What is truth? » and then gone forth, without awaiting the answer, but when it came they adored God for His goodness, and they strove to obey His Word, when

He told them that as there was but one God, so there can be but one Faith and one Baptism.

Dear St. Thomas, we invoke you to plead for those who have doubted, even as you did once; your repentance, as the Risen Jesus stood before you, won a special blessing for all future generations of men, for He said, « Blessed are they, who have not seen, but who have believed ». (S. John XXI, 29).

X.

Our Lady with St. Mary Magdalene.

What was Our Lady to St. Mary Magdalen? What was St. Mary Magdalen to Her? Who can tell what that dear penitent was to the Immaculate Mother of God?

Truly, Mary of Magdala was a delight to Mary's Heart, a flower of the Passion, the fruit of the Precious Blood. Our Lady loved to have her, with her and Magdalen loved to take her place, sitting at Our Lady's feet, clasping her hand looking up into Her face, as into the eyes of Jesus, evoking the remembrance of the day she first saw the face of Jesus, her God, when one glance of His had truly lifted her soul from hell to Heaven. It had been for long the abode of the evil one, and in one instant it became a Sanctuary pure and fragrant with God's spirit dwelling within it. Her soul so capable of love was inundated with Divine Love, and deep as was Her sorrow, she tasted in the peace that reigned within her, a joy she had not known could ever be. Our Lady knew that it was the look from Jesus that had converted both Peter and Magdalen, and she loved them with an intense love, as she saw their true sorrow. It was perfect sorrow because its motive was that of pure love.

Peter had fallen so soon after his first Communion. It was an aggravation of his grief to remember that Last Supper, and its grand grace, the hour His Master had so longed for. « With desire have I desired to eat this Pasch with you, before I suffer » (St. Luke XXII, 15). Their lives mingled together, Master and disciple, and then came Peter's fall, followed by his life-long sorrow and repentance.

Mary would bring out some of Her treasures to show to him and to Magdalen when She wished to comfort them. A lock of hair, perhaps, or something Jesus had touched; and joy thrilled her own Heart at seeing how they treasured up what She gave them. The Magdalen who had clung to His Sacred Feet, St. Peter who had walked hand in hand with Him and, with loving familiarity, asked Him question after question, which He never wearied of answering. And his great comfort was to go over them in spirit, as he listend to Our Lady's voice. We couple these two great penitents together, for they must often have met in the house of John and each loved with a special affection Her who was the Mother of their Lord and Love.

We may be sure that from the very earliest years of the Christian era, Our Lady exercised Her special office as consoler of the sorrowful: « Consolatrix Afflictorum » the Church so fitly calls Her; and there was always some one with Her who needed help. How many souls has she not consoled in the nineteen long centuries which have passed, since she, the Immaculate Conception, eternally present to the mind of God, first appeared in this weary world, fair and beautiful as the gentle moon, terrible as an army, set in battle array. How can She, so sweet and

loving, be terrible? Let us look at a little hen, when its brood is attacked or in danger, and that simple example will give us an idea, very faint it is true, of what Our Heavenly Mother, the Mother of all mankind, is, when her children are assailed? She, who from the beginning, received power to crush the serpent's head, still sends legions of angels to protect her children in their needs. How many, alas, would have given way to despair, if it had not been for the sweet thought of Mary, and Mary as their Mother? Our Lady, began, in the first ages of the Church, to do what she has done ever since. We all know that if there is one person we are sure will sympathise with us in all our troubles, it is our own mother; how much more then, is it not true of the one perfect Heavenly Mother, whom Jesus has bequeathed to His Church?

Let us turn our glance, in this spiritual visit we are now making to St. John's house, on Our Lady, as she consoles one who had been singularly favoured by Our Lord, and therefore whose soul, if we may so express it, was specially attuned to suffering. Our Lady, one day, opened the door of an inner room, found St. Mary Magdalen, her head resting on a bench, holding in her hand a piece of purple stuff, stained with blood, while the tears streamed down her face.

« Our Lady approached » Mary, my poor child, « she said, and sitting down she drew the sweet flower of repentance towards her, and kissed the piece of purple robe, she held in her hand. Tears, we know, are a gift of God, but some tears are the result of physical weakness; and the natural character of St. Mary Magdalen might have led her to excess in her reflections on the past, and it grieved Our Lady's gentle heart, to see her so sorrow-

stricken as now. She clung close to Our Lady as that sweet Mother strove to soothe Her, « It was on this day I first met Him, and He looked upon me ».

« And therefore », said Our Lady » It is a day for you to pour out your earnest thanksgiving ».

« I know it, Mother, I know it; but the remembrance of His gentle look brought back my sorrow and remorse, the remorse that will never leave me. What would I not have wished to have done for Him, if I had known Him before. The time was so short, and He was taken from us, and I saw my Beloved my Lord clothed in this robe of scorn; the remembrance of that day pierces my heart? I might have gone nearer to Him, I might have pushed my way through the crowd, as Veronica did, but I was ashamed; when I first saw Him, I did on the impulse of the moment, that which brought contempt on my Love, that such a sinner should dare to approach Him, or be allowed to kiss His Feet? Would that I had gone nearer to Him, on that terrible day, but my whole being was submerged in grief, such grief that I had never imagined could be endured, for I deemed it was my sins, all my sins He suffered for, and shed His Blood ».

She pressed the blood-stained fragment to her lips, and clinging more closely to the Mother of her Love, her frame shook with the sobs which came from her heart. This was no new or infrequent thing with the Magdalen, and Mary sat with her quietly, holding her, almost supporting her in her arms, permitting the overcharged heart to give vent to its grief for a time.

« Magdalen », she then whispered softly, « You long to console Jesus, and yet you grieve as though you cannot do now, what you wish to have done then ».

« He is dead, He is not on earth, I cannot see Him » ; and she raised herself a little, looking up into Mary's Face, listening for what she was about to say. « Mary, your love has taught you much, has it not taught you that there is no past or future with your God, all is present; what you say to Him now, he heard on that day, what you wish to have done He will accept as though you had indeed done it. Love Him now and tell Him, all you could have wished to have told Him on that day, and the acts of loving reparation you now make were foreseen by Him, and comforted Him: on the Cross. Be grateful, Mary, that you were there at the moment of the world's salvation. How many in future ages will envy you that post! How will the thought of you lead to the love of God! Oh thank Him, thank Him with a full heart, for He has done great things to you, Mary of Magdala, « She continued more solemnly », I tell you this for your consolation, that your desire and love of Jesus, your desire for His personal presence, is so pleasing to your Lord, that henceforth those who ask your prayers, reminding you of your love for the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, will obtain great graces in time of need, that will bring the most Sacred Mysteries to them, despite apparently insuperable obstacles. Priests who wish to offer the Holy Sacrifice, the faithful, who desire to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, will pray to you, and Jesus will listen to you, when you appeal to Him for those who have reminded you of your love for His Sacred Humanity ».

Magdalen listened eagerly, and Our Lady continued, « You have given glory to the Most High, Mary, His condescension and mercy have shone out magnificently in your regard, you have trusted Him, when you threw yourself

at His Feet, and many indeed, by your example, will be inspired to fly to the good God, when they have sinned, for forgiveness. Thus He is glorified by the trust of His creatures. He has said, Mary, that your love for Him, shall be told everywhere His Gospel will be preached. Is this not comfort for you, and will it not induce you to pray, ever more and more fervently for sinners, and their conversion? »

Mary Magdalen answered, « My life, henceforth, by the help of God, shall be spent in prayer and penance for sinners ».

« Pray », said Our Lady, « that whosoever reads the history of God's wondrous ways on your behalf, may look up to Jesus with love, with love caught from His Eyes, and that they may become, like you, fair trophies of the Passion of Christ. Thus, whenever sadness comes near you to try your trust in God, think upon those souls who will depend upon your example for hope and trust in God, and daily increase your thanksgiving for the great graces God has bestowed upon you and to which you have so faithfully corresponded ».

The storm had passed over the soul of St. Mary Magdalen, and she was comforted, and prepared for that life, so wonderful, of Prayer and penance, which was to open the way to so many souls who were to become beautiful works of the Holy Spirit. From that age to the present, there have been many pure and innocent ones, of both sexes, who have devoted themselves to lives of penance, till their souls have become brilliant, and shine with an unearthly lustre. They could hardly tell how it was they were led to such lives, but their hearts are filled with a joy that the world can neither give nor take away. They

have followed their Lord, and the world cannot understand it; it cannot comprehend the attraction so many holy people find in a life of severe penance. They might, perhaps understand the Magdalen, but they certainly do not understand these pure souls who have followed the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, and find in it a sweetness all the pleasures of the world could not give.

Penance is indeed a special design of God, to defeat the wiles of the Evil One, who when he robbed this earth of its innocence, knew not that God would draw from it a fresh beauty in its place, – the beauty of penance. Its grandeur comes from its being an outcome of the Passion of Jesus.

From the earliest ages of the Church the unerring instinct of the true Christian was to do penance. They wore sackcloth under their costly robes, as we learn in the life of St. Cecilia, whose incorrupt body lies in that church that was once her own palace, in Rome, and when the sacred remains were exhumed, in 1599, beneath the gold embroidered robe of a Roman lady, a rough garment of sackcloth was found which we are told she always wore. The Saints of the early years mortified their bodies, and subdued their appetites, so that there arose from the ruins of the old creation, beings who give their Creator a new and special glory. They trampled on the things of earth; they breathed Heaven, holiness dwelt in them. Ah, in this age of ours, is not penance too lightly thought of? Is it not put down, with what, perhaps, is worldly prudence, but is certainly not heavenly wisdom? Nobody is too weak to do penance, and as a rule, we find those who do penance healthier and stronger than those who do not do it.

« Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish ». Were those words not meant for the 20th century, as much as for the first? Is not the whole world overrun with the enemies of God, both visible and invisible? Our Lord Himself, told us, that there are some evil spirits, that can only be cast out by prayer and fasting. Do we who say we love God, say so truly, while we take as much pains as possible to avoid any kind of penance? Are these too strong words? Examine and see. The argument used in excuse for this sad state of things is the amount of sickness that we see everywhere; but how few are there who take sickness in the proper spirit, the spirit of humble penance. Some people take it fretfully, some take it philosophically, others take it with great patience and resignation, but few, very few, with a feeling that they deserve it. There are some, not many, who take suffering and sickness as if God had injured them, both in their attitude and words and by their petulancy with those around them they seem to resent their seeming injuries.

We have rather enlarged upon this point and may have wearied our readers, and rendered our little work unpalatable, but there is hardly a more important point, or one more frequently overlooked. It is a thing to dwell on, and to pray over, and would solve many difficulties if rightly understood. Many, who talk about social rights, if they realised that this is a fallen world, would see that though their ideas are in themselve very beautiful, yet they are hardly suited to the world as we find it at present. Poverty and suffering are the penances God has imposed to make up for sin and selfwill, they are the very token of pardon God has given this earth. But the offence committed against an Infinite God could not be condoned by the

suffering of a finite being; therefore the Eternal Word took a body in which to suffer and to do penance for the whole human race, by the shedding of His Blood. Thus the Redemption has brought out a new beauty in this fallen world, which if we are wise we should desire to have a share in.

It has been left to the 20th Century to try and gain Heaven by a new road, and not the beaten path trodden by the early Christians, not indeed the path trodden by the Saints, but one which self love has made for itself, and then excuses itself on the plea of delicacy and ill-health. It is a sad pity, for this mistaken self indulgence breeds all manner of delusions and temptations, which would be put to flight if man were to consider himself in his true position before His Creator, that of a creature, and a fallen creature. As we are speaking on this subject, we would touch lightly on another point in connection with it, an error which we sometimes come across in very holy people, even ecclesiastics, who are really anxious to fulfill their duties, and hold themselves wholly excused on account of their health. They will travel; go to expensive cures; and spend the time in trying new remedies; and as the years roll in, these valetudinarians are always intending to do something for God when they have regained their health.

Let them go into some crowded corner of their Lord's vineyard, in one of our big cities for example, and they may see there as we have seen, some poor sick priest, far worse than themselves, who would rather die than give up his work, he bravely struggles through the day's hard work, going about like the good Shepherd, seeking the lost sheep; and returns at night, almost too exhausted

to rest. yet, at the end of such a day, there is a sweetness and content, that none but those who have experienced it, can know.

That holy priest, perhaps, if he had yielded to his own feelings might, like many others, be travelling about in search of health, instead of going everywhere doing good; he preferred to use the present time, rather than wait for a future, which might never be his.

Ah, no, whoever you may be who read, it is a mistake to wait for the health which may never come; work while it is day, for you do not know whether you may have to-morrow, in which to labour for God. Though you are weak and delicate there is much perhaps that you could do, if you wished, and you would be both holier and happier by doing what little lies in your power; you can think for others, and help and encourage many a good work. A little more faith and trust in the dear Lord who was so often wearied seeking souls, and you mny be able to do more, than you now dream is possible for you to accomplish, for God's Honour and the good of souls. Your health will not suffer much, and even if it does you will have the consolation of knowing you have spent yourself in doing good. There is no law of God, which exacts this eccessive care of ones health, and it spoils many otherwise beautiful characters, whose whole life seems taken up in the search for what God apparently never intended them to obtain; though at the same time, they were not intended to spoil their whole lives, and grow selfish and self absorbed, thus marring the spiritual edifice of their souls, which they were sent into the world to make perfect, and thus to glorify their Creator,

We must crave forgiveness for some apparently hard

things we have said, but, in our lifetime we have met so many fine characters, whom we could not but revere, but who certainly have spoiled their lives, neglecting much good and even manifest duties, in their futile search for health, and thus doing no good either to their own souls or those of others and losing the beauty of their Lives. They may do it with a good intention, but it is a mistake, and a dangerous mistake, Sickness and suffering seem more than ever on the increase; it seems as if God were thus visiting His people; let us then bow our heads beneath His Almighty Hand, and accept from Him our just penance. Let us remember, also that the Son of Man came as a leper and as one struck by God, and we shall be ashamed to be as St. Bernard, tells us a « delicate member under a thorn crowned Head ».

Let us humbly acknowledge that we have been cowardly in the past, and resolve to practise daily acts of loving penance and mortification, that will help us to resemble our Thorn crowned King.

St. Mary Magdalen, that first and dearest of penitents will be our Model, and like her, we will love much, to whom so much has been forgiven.

We visit, again, that quiet room, in that obscure street in Jerusalem, where Our Lady spent so many years after our Lord's Ascension, till the storm of persecution drove Her forth to seek refuge in distant Ephesus; it was such a quiet simple life, and yet, in its simplicity lay its grandeur. Our Lady's Life up to the Ascension, had been a succession of marvels: Her Immaculate Conception, Her divine Maternity, Her Life of constant and familiar intercourse with the Incarnate Word, and the great part She took in the tremendous Sacrifice, by which the world's Redemption

was wrought: « There stood at the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother ». All these are transcendingly grand and glorious; they are followed by that wonderful Descent of the Holy Ghost, which marked the commencement of a fresh epoch in our Lady's Life, as Mother of the Church of Christ. It is thus we are trying to contemplate Her now, when those mysteries of Her early Life, both glorious and terrible, are accomplished, and we find her just as wonderful in her lowly life of patient waiting, for the moment which will unite Her to Her Divine Son for ever.

We learn lessons from Her that fill our hearts with gratitude to God, that He created so marvellously holy a being. She fulfilled the designs of God, on Her behalf, with the greatest perfection; there was no awkwardness, Her simplicity was sublime, and She passed through all the fearful trials of the Life God had marked out for Her, without a war on the beautiful tranquillity of Her life of complete conformity to the Will of God.

We are looking at Her now, in Her quiet room, in the house of St. John; St. Mary Magdalen is sitting near Her, and both are engaged in work. Our Lady, hearing her sigh, looked up; and seeing her hands have dropped, and that there is a rather sorrowful look on her face, asks gently, « What troubles thee, my Mary? »

St. Mary Magdalen arose from her seat, and came closer to Our Lady It is the old thought she said, « That I ought to go and teach those who have not heard of Jesus, and His love. When I think of what I might have been if I had not met Him, and known His love, Ithink also of the thousands who have never heard His name, and I long to go and tell them. At the same time, I think of you

and feel I could never leave you, and I am torn between these two feelings ».

She turned her beautiful earnest face towards Our Lady, and Our Lady caressed the luxuriant fair hair She so loved, and, « What is the other thought? » She asked.

« Ah, Mother », she said, « The two thoughts seemed to contradict one another, for I feel within me a longing to withdraw from the world, and all creatures, and to lead a life of penance alone with my God. How am I to know what is His will for me, Whom I desire to please so much? Would that I had asked Him, before He left us, but I could think of nothing but the sweetness of His presence. I could not even imagine life, without Him », and she stopped quickly, and put her arms around Our Lady, entreatingly, most lovingly, « Mother I do not want to pain you ».

« Speak, child », said Our Lady, « Say what is in your mind ».

« You are His Mother, and I know not I nor anyone can comprehend your love for Him; but Oh, how I loved Him, how can I live without Him? »

Our Lady drew her closer to herself, she spoke no word, but she held the sorrowing Magdalene close to her breast, while the tears flowed faster and faster.

Poor St. Mary Magdalen! We, who have not your love can not know your sorrow. Our Lady silently offered Jesus that sweet flower of His Passion; we cannot follow Our Lady's prayer, it is beyond us, we cannot imagine that commune of Her Heart with the Heart of Jesus. Did she not rejoice with Him, in this chosen soul, purchased by His Precious Blood, and did it not comfort Her for Her bitter share in that Passion? Those tears of hers were

as an offering of great price, for they were the effect of pure love, Angels could ascend with them to Heaven, for they were jewels of earth, shining brilliants, that would gleam with exceeding lustre around the Throne of the most High.

Presently Mary Magdalen recovered herself, and said « Forgive me, Mother, I am indeed selfish to bring my sorrow to you, for how much greater is yours. My pain of loss, what is it indeed compared to yours? Only you have not the pain of not being sure of what He wills, of what will please Him; this is my sorrow, that my life must be devoted to His service, and yet I know not what He wants me to do, and in that lies my great pain ».

« Do not be troubled », said Our Lady, tenderly, « He who has done so much for you, will continue His protection, and guide you in all things, but at present He would, have you honour Him, in this state of uncertainty, which cannot be otherwise but very painful. He would have you honour Him by a perfect act of trust and confidence; cast yourself on the vast ocean of His Divine Providence, and thus you may glorify Him now, in a manner you may never be able to do again. You may never have another opportunity of trusting Him so blindly, once you are securely engaged in God's service, leading the life you have every reason to believe is His Will for you. Those three wishes of your soul may all be whispers from God's Holy Spirit, and you may yet glorify Him in those various states, ere you go to enjoy His Everlasting embrace in Heaven ».

« Ah what is that thought to me! It is such a joy to think that I may go to Him, see Him again, hear Him speak, that I dare not dwell on it ».

She stopped and Our Lady answered, « Yes, Mary, this joy is for you, and He will place His Hands on your head, and call you again by your name; think of it, my child, and your love for His Son will be a delight to the Eternal Father, and you will be strenghtened to suffer all things for His love ».

« My Jesus, my Jesus », murmured St. Mary Magdalen, and the incense of her love arose from the pure thurible of her heart, and her ardent desire to see the Face of her God mingled with the « Jubilate » the thanksgiving of those who had gone before and had entered already into the joy of their Lord. The thanksgiving of the redeemed in Heaven, who cry out in their gratitude to their God, is ever mingled with the hymns of hope sent up by the Just on earth, who trust that their God will take them to Himself, after their labours on earth are over. This the Psalmist has expressed mystically in the words, the « Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the firmament proclaimeth the works of His Hands ».

Let us therefore join our little melodies to the glorious choirs of heaven and earth, but let us fear, lest, by our want of harmony with the will of God, we make discord in that beautiful music that ascends continually from earth to heaven.

XI.

Our Lady with the early Christians.

As we write these things, and as we picture the Immaculate Mother, bending over the dying bed of one of the early Christians, as we attempt to guage the feelings

of that Mother's Heart, as she with Heavenly love tends that poor man, the image of Jesus to Her, (teaching us how we also should regard those around us) we rejoice, remembering that the same Mother, is to the present day, appointed by God's Providence, to be the « Mother, of Men ». She assists them in spirit, and sends Her representatives to aid them, in all times of trial, especially in the hour of death. We ponder over these things in our Minds, and, as we adore the Mighty Mind of God, and thank Him for the wonderful gift of Faith, sorrow fills our hearts, that so many do not possess this gift, who, when their minds have realized the beauty of the things of God, will exclaim, « Oh, if it were but true! » They do not see that the very greatness of these things proves they are above the conceptions of the human mind. Who could invent such a marvelous manifestation of love, as Jesus feeding us, with His Body and Blood. God, as a Mother, giving us of His own substance? or that other marvel, the Virgin Mother, with the Child Divine? Look through the truths of Faith. No mind could ever imagine such supernal mysteries. Ah! let us, then, be in earnest, to make known the treasures of faith, contained in the Church. Let us by word, and example bring light to those who « sit in darkness ». May our lives be a daily witness to the Truths we believe, and may the Sun of Justice shine upon the minds of men, dispersing the mists and clouds: « Let there be light ». There are many, indeed, who view these Truths of Faith, and seing them to be so desirable and loveable, often, (as we have said) sadly exclaim, « Oh! if they were but true ». We have this grand faith, by which we know our God, as well or better, than we know ourselves and we are lost in wondering

admiration, and yet are not surprised, for our Faith teaches that Gods Infinity is beyond our comprehension. Oh grand gift of Faith! God's great gift! How we should value it how we should treasure it, and make frequent acts of faith, for it is a gift that can be increased by repeated acts, or by neglect, it can be lost. It is this we should be unweariedly careful of, that our lives correspond with Our Faith.

We may easily picture to ourselves how our Lady would speak of this grand virtue to the young Catechumens, and they would eagerly drink in her words. She would tell them that we can be very near great treasures, and yet not know it, because we have not, the Faith. The Samaritan woman, who came to the well where Jesus sat wearied, as He so often was, knew Him not, and He spoke to her, « If thou didst but know the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee, 'Give me to drink', thou wouldst perhaps have asked Him, and He would have given thee living water » (John IV, 10).

Jesus often visits, us, and we know it not, we should pray for an increase of that spiritual discernment, to know when He visits us, and according to our faith, we shall receive His gifts. We want to bring the light of faith to those around; then let us increase it in ourselves first of all.

These simple sketches or considerations which we are drawing of our Lady's Life, (which was not always as hidden as we sometimes imagine it), these simple thoughts regarding what were probably daily occurrences in that Life, are written with the hope of helping to increase your faith and therefore your love. Hope also must correspond, for it is always the outcome of faith and love. Make the

sign of the Cross constantly, and having made a compact, daily renew it, to let all your works shine with Faith, Hope and Charity, and mark your intention with the Sign of the Cross.

Would that we could speak to you, with the words and voice of our Lady, it is so easy to picture her in our mind, counselling, instructing, and constantly using our dear Lord's Sacred Words, for she loved them above all others. « If you have Faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, Remove from hence hither, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you » (Matth. XVII, 19).

We wonder how we can obtain so great a faith as this, we often dread great graces for fear of the responsability of using them well; it may be cowardice, or it may be wisdom it depends on the character and spiritual condition of the individual.

The Apostles, certainly, rejoiced humbly in their gifts, they used them for God's glory, and the good of souls. They would come to our Lady and tell Her what they had done; did she ever have to repeat those words of Her Son, « You know not, of what spirit you are? » After the descent of the Holy Ghost, on Whit Sunday, the Apostles were filled with wisdom and knowledge, but we can hardly doubt that the Holy Spirit, often used. His Spouse, Mary, and spoke through her to those around.

Many mothers also, with sorrows similar to that of Saint Monica, but without her sanctity, often came to tell our Lady of their grief, and while she condoled with them, in her heart she sorrowed still more over the offence thus given to God, and offered Her Divine Son's filial devotion, in reparation, for these undutiful children. This was a

constant practice of Mary, to offer the merits and the actions of Jesus, mortal life; for God's works do not merely happen, and then pass away, they are lasting. We know this, but we do not always realize it. Mother, help us to make use of the treasures of the Church!

The love and honour of Jesus for His Holy Mother, is indeed a Divine beauty and the perpetual treasure of His people, and poor Mothers with undutiful children, might offer in reparation this devotion of Jesus, who was the Exemplar of all mankind. Jesus' love for His Mother is known only to Himself, but how deeply He loves those, who love and honour Her!

Mary, having tried to console such unhappy Mothers, would strive to teach them this practice, leading them to sorrow over the offence this undutiful conduct gives the Most High, as well as to grieve over their pain, which is right and what God expects from mothers; that holy mourning is blessed, and is pronounced so by the Lips of Jesus.

There are many others who must have come to her, in those first years of faith, while she was still spared to the Infant Church. We can well imagine that, that poor woman « from the crowd, who lifting up her voice, said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb, that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck' » (Luke XI 27) would travel any distance to see that wondrous One, who had brought Jesus forth; would not Simon of Cyrene also be anxious to see Her, who must have prayed that he might have grace to carry the Cross? Surely, too, Pilate's wife, who had had that strange dream, the night before the Crucifixion, would go to our Lady. We could scarcely imagine anything else, but that all who had known our dearest Lord, would, after His Ascension, turn eagerly to His

Mother, for advice and help in their various difficulties and trials. Happy, indeed, were they, who saw Mary in mortal flesh, for there is but one sweet Immaculate Conception; one spotless Virgin Mother, Mother of Jesus and Mother of Men. She is the Queen of Heaven, and Mistress of Angels, but She is also, our own Mother Mary, and we love to think of her in her earthly life, surrounded by Gods human family, men, women, and children of every condition, each soul telling Her its special need.

We can well imagine that many came from afar to see the Mother of the Messias, as well as many of those who were converted after the death of Jesus; those converts who had had any share in the Passion of Her Divine Son would naturally come to tell her their sorrow for the part they had taken in His sufferings. Perhaps, among them were some of the rough soldiers, who had scourged our Lord, for as the Precious Blood spattered their garments, is it not likely grace may have worked in some of their number, and if so they would naturally have sought Mary, but after the Resurrection. This is very natural, for all feel honoured in meeting the relations of great people, how much more would it be with the Mother of the Lord? We recently knew a lady go to the greatest trouble to obtain an introduction to the Pope's sisters: she was as well known titled lady, herself, and they were of the poorer class of Italian women, but they were the Holy Father's sisters, and that was quite sufficient. It is always so; and when we think of how the coming of the Messias had been looked forward to; how the ages had rolled on, and mens'hearts had sickened with hope deferred, longing for the Advent of Him, « who was to redeem Israel »; we can understand what must have been the regret of those

who had not known Him, and who were converted after His Death. Would they not come to Our Lady, and tell Her their grief and penitence that because of the hardness of their hearts, they had not understood, those things that should have shown them that the Messias had really come?

The fact that He had been amongst them, and they knew it not, must have filled them with great remorse, and Our Lady would be touched with pity at their sorrow. Ah! the poor Protestants of the present day are often not as reasonable. do they think it possible, that those who were converted in the early years of the Church vould treat Our Lady as they treat Her, ignoring Her position in the plan of Redemption? Tell this to your friends, outside the Fold, let the few thoughts that we are suggesting increase the love of Our Lady, in your hearts. May they also enable you to say the word in season, that will sow the seeds of love of Mary in other hearts, who do not know or love the loving Jesus, as they should, because they put His Mother on one side.

We were imagining Our Lady with some of the early converts around her, and picturing one of the rough soldiers, who helped to scourge Jesus. The Innocent Lamb of God had looked upon him, and his arm grew nerveless, he may have seen Jesus led off, and followed Him, afterwards, at a distance, for most certainly human respect seems to have been a very great fault, at the time, both among the Jews and Gentiles. There were the multitudes, who had eaten the miraculous loaves and fishes, and had witnessed so many other miracles, where were they at the time of the Passion?

There was one, indeed, who boldly sent to her husband, a man enslaved by this fearful bondage of human respect,

and warned him, « Have thou nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things this day, in a dream, because of Him » (St. Matth. XXVII, 19). Most unhappy man, he heeded not the warning, and how often we are warned, and grow weary of those who warn us, and foolishly prefer the company of those who flatter us.

We may well believe that Pilate's wife, grieving greatly when she saw his weakness of character was leading him to sanction so great a crime, would seek our Lady out, and entreat her forgiveness for her husband's sin. « Mother of the Just One », she would cry, « Plead for mine and me, teach us truth; reconcile us to the Almighty by your intercession, lest my husbands condemnation of the Innocent may bring the Justice of the Most High upon us! Intercede for us! »

Ah! From the wery earliest ages of the Church, Mary has always been the Help of Christians, the « Consolatrix afflictorum ». The Lily of Jerusalem was placed by God in the position, where the beauty of Her soul shone out, giving unspeakable glory to her Creator, beautifying the earth, and filling it with the sweet odour of virtues, which we call Heavenly, but which, indeed, can only be practised on earth, God's chosen One was placed in many trying positions, where She glorified Her Maker by practising those virtues in a still more resplendent manner. If God, in the designs of an All wise Providence, places us at times under certain trying conditions, where we have the opportunity of glorifying Him by the practise of certain difficult virtues, such as the forgivenes of injuries, or doing good to those, who have done us harm, ought we not to be grateiful to Him, for giving us such magnificent occasions of glorifying Him with special honour? It is very easy

to believe that poor crushed woman, Pilate's wife, would go to Mary, struck with horror at her husband's deed; the faith that had dawned upon her growing stronger and stronger, she asked herself. « Was it possible that this » Just man « was the Messias, looked forward to, through the lapse of ages, promised from the commencement of the world? » witnessed to, in a strange dark manner, even by heathen oracles? Had her husband committed deicide, condemned the God-Man to be crucified? Poor woman! What anguish, what agonies of mind she must have gone through? She sought Mary, and in the eyes of Heaven was it not a beautiful picture Our Lady and Pilate's wife? An unerring instinct of grace, led her to Mary, it would seem to have been a custom of hers to act on every good impulse, and, indeed, it would be well for us to pray often and fervently « From the neglect of Thy holy inspirations, deliver us, O Lord! » for it is a common fault, which loses countless graces. « Lady! Mother of the Just One » She would cry, « He who was your son, was He indeed the King who was to come to redeem Israel? » and the griefstricken eyes, eagerly sought the answer in Mary's face. She grieved with this sorrow, and She answered, sweetly, « Jesus, my Son is « the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, Who is, and Who was and who is to come ».

« Lady! Say His prayer for me and mine ».

« Pray with me », spoke Our Lady, tenderly drawing her to Herself, silently for awhile, and then the words came softly from Mary's lips, falling like balm on that grief stricken soul, « Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!

« He knew not, what he did, my husband knew it not. O God, show mercy » came from the poor wife's lips, « would that he had known! Would that he had listened to me! »

And Our Lady spoke again, « In this world of ours, there is ever time for repentance, never is it too late, Time, with God, is mercy. Jesus liveth now, He dieth now no more, but liveth, making intercession for this world, for all, even for those who rejected Him. He sitteth at the Right Hand of the Father, ever the Saviour of men, and bearing even in His glorified Body those Wound's by which He ransomed them. Be comforted, then, for God will accept your sorrow, and by your tears and prayers you may obtain grace for your erring one ».

And she arose, and went her way, helped by the words of Christ's Mother, and if, as we are told, in after years her sanctity made some atonement for her husband's crime, may we not attribute it to the grace obtained for her by the prayers of the Mother of Dolours?

« Refugium peccatorum, ora pro nobis! »

XII.

Our Lady Among the Apostles.

It is easy to imagine that not only the Catechumens and recent converts were objects of solicitude to Our Lady, but Her motherly Heart was always most keenly interested in the welfare both spiritual and temporal, of the Apostles, those dear sons who had come to Her in the place of Jesus. It was a great joy to Her to watch the daily growth of grace in the soul of each, and note how they were

being transformed to the likeness of the Son of God; as their hearts became more and more inflamed with Divine Love, they became more and more transfigured into the image of Jesus. We have already tried to think what St. Paul would say and do, when he came into the sweet presence of the Mother of His Master, how he would tell her of his burning love, and his desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. St. Peter every day grew more worthy of love and veneration in our Lady's eyes, as She watched that character, not naturally a lovely one, but made so, supernaturally, by his humility and contrition; he grew every day sweeter and more gentle to all around and his spirit of abnegation made him so. He was the head and chief of the Apostolic band, but always made himself the least and last whenever he could do so.

One evening, they were waiting in the house of St. John, they had come to see Our Lady, for it was always a great joy and rest to their souls, to come and unburden their minds to Her. They were always simple and open with Her, for they felt that She never wearied of them, and Her Heart loved each one of them with a love no other Mother, however sweet and loving, could ever give her children. While they were waiting for Our Lady's entrance, St. Peter and Paul had entered into a discussion, which grew rather warm, when Our Lady came into the room. Both rose as She entered, and greeted them in her usual sweet way, « Of what are you speaking so earnestly? » she asked, gently. St. Peter, who before he had the right to speak first, always answered before the others, now was wont to let all speak before he did, and so he left it to St. Paul to answer Our Lady.

« Peter was telling me of the blunt manner I have

when correcting and I answered did they not say of the Master, « Master, we know that Thou art a true speaker and teachest the way of God, in truth, neither carest thou for any man, for thou dost not regard the persons of men ? »

St. Paul's voice was gentler, and he was sorry he had not answered more humbly, which St. Peter, noticing, said « I know Paul' s motivé and that what he says is true, but there are many who would listen to what is not true, with a better grace, than listen to the truth told as plainly as our brother tells it ». Our Lady smiled at St. Peter's effort to remove the little confusion St. Paul felt, and turning to the latter said; « Paul, you have often wished you had known your Master, and had lived with Him, and spoken with Him, show now to all around, in word and deed the love you would wish to have shown Him ».

The two Apostles looked at Our Lady, it would have been hard to say which loved Her the best; to St. Peter the Mother's tones seemed the echoes of the Master's sweet voice, while St. Paul's uppermost thought was, « what must Jesus have been if His Mother was so sweet ? » A new fire seemed enkindled within him; « It shall be my live's work, Mother, to love the souls whom Jesus saved. They shall be mine, those souls, for whom HE died, whom He redeemed », and then drawing nearer to Our Lady, he said softly « Mother of Jesus, as Thou hast said to me ' Show to all around in word and deed the love you would have shown to Jesus ' thou art the first, Thou hast accepted me as thy own, I am thine; help me then, to be a true Christian, to manifest Christ to all about me, and for His sake I will love my neighbour as myself ». Were not his ardent words, written years afterwards to the people of

Corinth, « Who is weak and I am not weak, who is scandalized and I am not on fire? » but the result of the lessons of the charity learned from the Mother of Fair Love? How well he practised those lessons which he had studied where we also should study the lessons of perfections, by the side of the Mother of the Word Incarnate To us as much as to the favoured one who stood with her on Calvary has She been given. When, Mary the valiant woman, the tender Mother of Jesus, stood beneath her Son's Croos. She received us all as Her Children in the person of St. John; we were therefore Jesus'dying gift to His Mother. The Redeemer gave His own, purchased at the price of His Precious Blood, to be Hers forever; and we have the same right to go to Her, and learn at Her feet Her lessons of holiness that the Apostles had. We might ask ourselves, did Our Lady know the fate of those Her favourite sons, as they sat conversing with Her, that bright summer evening, while the last rays of the western sun lit a glory round those heads, on which, one day the martyr's crown would one day rest? St. John had entered quietly, as was his wont, and the conversation between the three had grown general; they spoke of their hopes and projects, and of the Separation, which must so soon take place; for each member of their little band knew they had to go forth, as their loved Master had bade them, and preach the Gospel to all Nations, and they knew too what might await them, for the Master's Name.

In the midst of their discussion, St. John turned and looked at Our Lady, and their eyes followed his, Mary was looking up to Heaven, and there seemed a light around Her, making the sweet face still more beautiful, they had been so engrossed in their conversation, that they had not

noticed Our Lady's change of attitude, till St. John turned towards Her: « Mother, you look radiant, what is it? » he asked.

It seemed as if some of the glory from the angel at Her side was reflected on Our Lady's face as She answered, I was thinking of you, my sons, and the joy that awaits you. I rejoice in your future glory, in the high places reserved for you in Heaven, for ever surrounding your Lord; The Sacred Humanity is glorified by those who have followed Him, as you have done and will do ».

Did Our Mother as She spoke foresee how they would follow their Lord? Did she see that long walk that St. Peter and Paul would have to take before they earned their crown? We have traced it through the winding streets of old Rome, and you; dear reader if you ever visit the Eternal City can follow it, follow it from the beginning to the close. It was not a quick martyrdom, for St. Peter was not crucified or St. Paul beheaded without some previous suffering and humiliation, which is not always remembered. In the older part of Rome, known as Trastevere, there is an ancient church, which contains the column used in the scourging of these two glorious champions of Christ, which in shape and size resembles very much that used in the scourging of Our Lord, which is preserved in the Church of Santa Prassede. From the little church, which marks the spot where their cruel flagellation took place, the two Apostles set out on their walk to the places of execution. They embraced each other, and bade each other fare-well, and parted to meet so soon, at the feet of their loving Lord, in Heaven. What a walk that must have been through the heat of a Roman midsummer day, with bleeding wounds, weak and exhausted,

and the pitiless sun beating down upon them. St. Peters's journey was not so far, but what must have been the weary agony of St. Paul's long walk to the spot, miles outside the gates of Rome, now known as the «Tre Fontane»? Every step must have been fresh pain, till the agony would seem intolerable, and the one thought that supported him was that he was going to meet his loved Master, that alone gave him sufficient courage to finish his weary course; the end would come soon, it must come, and the end would be that Reward, exceeding great, for which he so long had sighed. Are there not very often days in our own lives, so full of weariness and pain, either mental or physical, or both, that they seem to us little short of unendurable. They must be borne, and yet we feel we cannot bear them. Ah! well for us if on those weary days, we, like St. Paul, take courage and strength from the thought of the loving Lord, Who, with unspeakable Love will one day draw us to Himself, and reward us for our patient suffering. It must end soon, it cannot last, and then how sweet will the ending be. The Apostles are now receiving in Heaven the recompense of all their weary suffering, and if, even while on earth they rejoiced to suffer for His Name's Sake, what is their joy now?

Let us listen again to Our Lady's words, as She speaks to them of the life that lies before them, « Oh the joy that awaits you, the joy of Jesus, in rewarding and recompensing you for your fidelity. You are to Jesus an everlasting joy, and He is to you more than you can realise. If your hearts are so full of love now, what will they be when you reach the Home of Love? The days of your life will indeed be days of suffering, but what will your eternity be? »

As our Lady paused St. Peter exclaimed, « Mother, how much we shall rejoice to see you with Jesus! »

St. John's eyes were wet with tears, as he looked at Peter, and St. Paul said « You have expressed the great desire of my heart to see our Master, with His Mother ».

Peter drew closer to him, « I have seen our Mother with her Son, and yet, God forgive me, I was so unworthy that after all these favours, I pierced Her Heart so cruelly by denying our Master ».

St. Paul clasped his hand in silent sympathy, « Peter, say not so; have I not, also, much to regret and blame myself for. If I had not been led astray, I too might have been with Our Master in His Life, with His Mother and with you all ».

Then St. Peter, in a low tone began to tell St. Paul of that day some years ago, when the simple fishers of Bethsaida, were first drawn to follow their Master, « They came and saw where He abode, and they staid with Him that day? » (John cap. I, v. 39). The Evangelists do not tell us what passed in that blessed dwelling, but no doubt there were many details that St. Peter, with his warm heart, would be glad to tell his fellow Apostle, till, seeing the pleasure with which St. Paul had listened to the little he had already related, he said: « The Mother is conversing with John, let us leave them for awhile, and I can tell you many other things you may like to hear ». They were always afraid of wounding Our Lady's humility, and how could they talk of the Master's Life on Earth without speaking also of His Mother, but when they were out of Our Lady's hearing, St. Peter began to tell St. Paul many a sweet instance of Our Lady's Motherly tenderness and thought for them, during the arduous labours and journeys

of the three years Ministry; sometimes when they returned from a fishing expedition She would herself prepare their food for them, and see to any little comfort that they needed, while they, on the other hand, loved to bring Her any little simple present that they could, knowing that they could give Jesus no greater pleasure than by showing their love to His Mother who was theirs as well. He would smile on them, and point out to them, where they would find Her, and She would receive the poor little offerings with the same gracious love with which she, today, from her bright throne in Heaven, accepts the humble gifts we offer through her Pure hands to her Divine Son. St. Peter spoke, also, of the looks and words of Mary. The few speeches the Sacred Scriptures do record of her are, we may well believe, characteristic of many other beautiful words of hers, that the Evangelists have not handed down to us. All this and much more did St. Peter tell his fellow Apostle, who listened with delight, till St. John's reappearance recalled them to the present, and they returned to the room they had just quitted. There they found others of their number, who were sitting around, resting after the many fatigues of their ministry. There had been much to speak of the recent persecutions, the increasing numbers of the converts, the dangers that surrounded the Infant Church all these were matters in which the Mother's advice and sympathy were always eagerly sought. Then a lull came in the conversation, and silence on the little room, till one of them, looking up, said, « Mother, we shall have to leave you soon; give us some word of our Master's to think of; one that perhaps we think too little of, and that He would wish us to remember ».

Our Lady answered with Her usual sweetness, « I will

give you a thought that should indeed help you, both for your own souls, and those of others. Do you remember the words your Master spoke to you, 'Be you therefore perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect'? » The Apostles listened attentively, they remembered that scene on the Hill of the Beatitudes, when they first heard those words, the bright sky above, the eager listening crowd around, and then in the midst, their Master, the most beautiful among the children of men, with that grave sweet look they knew so well; they could almost recall the tones in which He spoke to them, and then like an echo, came the Mother's sweet voice, as She continued, « How He looked for perfect souls, but in how many cases was he not sadly disappointed ». « Disappointed! », murmured St. Peter, under his breath, a short time ago, and he would have added « He shall not be disappointed in me », but he had learned wisdom through his fall, and so he merely breathed a prayer, « God forbid that I should disappoint my Master, again ».

Our Lady continued « Your Master saw all around Him; souls, the images of God, whom He had come on earth to save, but in so many the likeness of God was blurred and spoiled; and He, the All-perfect One, suffered at the sight of the imperfection of so many of His creatures ». The words of Our Lady sank deeply into the hearts of the Apostles, and enkindled in them a great and ardent desire to spread the Kingdom of God in the hearts of all around.

« Few indeed there were in whose soul the Image of God was to be found unmarred and bright. Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost, to restore the image of His Father in the souls of men, and how little did

they respond to His touch! He came unto His own and His own received Him not ».

Each of the Apostles thought in his own mind of how their own imperfections must have been a source of sorrow to their Master and have wounded His Sacred Heart; their many faults rose up so clearly before them, their impatience, their obstinacy, how mean and cowardly they had been at times, and so wanting in generosity. Ah! they might, had they been different, have comforted their Divine Master more. Yet as they thought this, one thought rose in the minds of each, there had been One at least who had never disappointed her God, whose soul had ever faithfully mirrored her Divine Son, and the Apostles rejoiced in the joy the Mother's soul had ever given their Master. Then St. Peter, turning, looked for St. John, and seeing he was not present, said « Mother, was it not John's purity of soul that made him the Beloved of Jesus?

But Our Lady answered gently, « The Spirit of God breatheth where It will. You are indeed beloved by Christ as well as John, but with some, virtue is to be won after a harder struggle than with others? You may have more to overcome, harder conflicts to face than John has, but they are glorious fights, for victory is assured to the humble. You all have the same mission, to sow the seeds of sanctity in the souls God has entrusted to you, for Christ seeks Saints ».

« What Our Master seeks », said one, « He shall have, if we can obtain it for Him ».

« By His grace, added Andrew », If we do our part. Mother, pray for us that through your Words we may better understand the desire of the Master's Heart for our sanctification. Surely we shall strive our best to fulfill His

Will ». Our Lady's voice was lower when she spoke again and the Apostles listened eagerly, for it was not often she spoke thus to them; « I have seen your Master and Love, among souls, and know how much He suffered when He met imperfections and faults in those who should have been wholly devoted to God and His glory. It is your work, my sons, to teach the brethren how the Infinitely Pure God hates infinitely the least stain, and how any disfigurement of the Image of God impressed on the soul in the beginning wounded your Master, as He, the Lover of souls, went seeking those precious images which His enemy had ensnared ».

Our Lady was silent, and the little company around Her prayed, some aloud, others to themselves. What was their prayer? That they might become perfect as their Heavenly Father was perfect; that they might ever seek perfection and teach it to all around. This was indeed a harvest where the labourers were few.

Can we not learn the same lesson as the Apostles, as we picture Our Mother speaking to them of the desire of Jesus for perfect souls. The extension of Christ's Kingdom did not consist only in the conversion of the sinner; but also in the formation of Saints. Is not this a thought that is sometimes overlooked? The Saints are the exception, not the rule, we do not seem to realise that God desires our sanctification, that the perfection of our souls is something very precious to Him. We seem to imagine that all He requires of us is to scramble into Heaven as best we can, that was all we were created for. It is a sad mistake, for God created us to be beautiful images of His own Infinite Beauty, and that we can only be by imitating as far as lies in our power, His Holiness. We must desire

it for ourselves, and strive to spread the desire of it in the souls of others. We perhaps, might find it easier to attract souls to sanctity and perfection according to their state, than by merely teaching them to do only what is barely necessary to gain Heaven and avoid hell. It is the instinct of the Good Shepherd in the souls of so many holy priests, that makes them devote themselves so exclusively to the conversion of sinners. But though this must be done, must the other be left undone? Would not rather the preaching of perfection, the desire of pleasing God intensely, be an additional aid in the conversion of souls? The Christian is one who is bound to follow Christ; what is that but saying in other words, that we must aim at the highest perfection, possible?

Ah! we need to think over those words of Our Lord, « Be you therefore perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect ». The words of Our Lady had sunk deep into the hearts of the Apostles, and Mary's lips had lingered lovingly over Her Divine Son's own words; and then she looked at St. Peter, for, like a tender Mother, she was always careful of his feelings, knowing how sensitive his great love and sorrow had made him, He looked troubled; « Are you sorrowful, Peter », asked Our Lady, « You, so dear to Jesus, who have received so great a trust from Him, whom He has made His Vicar on earth; all your days should be days of rejoicing ».

« But the trust is so great, Mother », he answered, « the office is so onerous, how shall I be able to guard myself, and keep from every thing that is imperfect, and I so hasty and impetuous? Shall I not miss, perhaps, in the hurry of life, much of its beauty?

« Nay », the Mother's gentle voice reminded him,

You must ever practise the lesson you are to, teach others; how perfection consists in doing God's Will in whatever Office He has placed you in. He has put you in the position you hold in His Church therefore it cannot hurt your soul, indeed it should help to sanctify, if your strive to perform faithfully and perfectly the various duties incumbent on you. And so it is with every one; they must strive to be perfect in their different states of life ».

St. Peter raised his head, and the ardent love of his heart rang in his voice as he answered, « Mother, by the grace of God, my Master shall not be disappointed in me. Perhaps in after years the remembrance of the Mother's words came back to the Apostles as they toiled in their arduous ministry, they thought of the sweet earnestness with which she spoke, and as she repeated the words of their Divine Master, they recalled the first time they had heard them spoken. The look of the Master and the Mother lingered in their memories, and impressed the great lesson on them that they were to sanctify their own souls first and then preach to all around that Doctrine the observance of which will make Saints,

The Apostles pondered over the words of the Mother of God, and as they left Her presence that evening to go forth on their quest for souls, they were strengthened and encouraged by her words to labour, with greater zeal in their Master's vineyard.

They left Our Lady's personal presence, it is true, but her memory was ever in their hearts and minds, and her influence over them lasted all their lives; so should it be with us, We have not the unspeakable privilege of the Apostles, of living and conversing with the Blessed Mother of God, but we can keep in spirit, near Her, and try to

follow the cousels She would have given us, had we too lived with Her in those favoured times we are trying to represent to ourselves. Mother! We are Thy younger children; we are not grand Apostles and Martyrs; we have not a gloriously sublime mission before us, but we have each our little work to do for Our dear Lord. Ah! then, dear Mother, pray, for us, that we may do it well and perfectly, fulfilling God's Will in the smallest matters, as in the greatest, and thus perfecting Our own souls and aiding in the sanctification of others.

XIII.

Our Lady with the Holy Women.

The first disciples would, we may not doubt, all come to our Lady whenever they were able, to tell her of their happiness and sorrow, their success and failure, and to claim her sympathy and her counsel. They would long to hear from her of their beloved Master, she would tell them what none but she could tell; she might show, and even give them, relics of the Holy Child, what he had touched, or used, or made. There would never be a troubled heart she could not console; never a perplexed soul she could not guide.

There is a tradition expressed in a picture, that the Holy Child once made a little model of a church, and when it was finished ran with joy to His mother and held it up to her loving gaze. Only a parable perhaps, but with what a deep significance. For the Church which the Pierced Hand of Jesus had fashioned in all her fair

proportions – the Church that shall endure for ever – the House of His redeemed – He has given into the hands of Mary, to her loving patronage and her undying care.

Think especially of how the women of Jerusalem would come to the Mother of sorrows. They would open their hearts to her with that relief we all feel when we can pour out our troubles to one who has felt the same and who we know feels for us. They would bring their children, and Mary would tell the little ones of her Divine Child and His early years, of what He had done, of the things He had made; and the children would long to do the same.

What must Mary have been, above all, to those holy women who had seen her, the Queen of Sorrows, following her Son to His most bitter Passion? Would not their sorrows seem in comparison small as they thought of hers? And our Mother would listen to all their tales of suffering would give them consolation, and raise their hearts to God. They would go away conforted, with a new power of hope and prayer.

Mary's heart was open to all; she never wearied of counselling and comforting. How could it be otherwise? How could she fail to care for those whom her Son had come to save? Were they not her own? She had given Him for their salvation, and in giving Him gave herself as well. The Incarnate Word spoke to the Eternal Father through His prophet: « Behold, I come to do thy Will, O God » (Heb. X. 9; Psalm XXXIX. 8, 9); and the Mother's Heart beat in perfect unison with the Heart of Jesus. She too, fitted by Divine power for her glorious mission, had come to do, without flaw or faltering, the royal Will of God. Mary was His chosen instrument, and all per-

fectly fulfilled the part assigned her as Mother of His great human family.

There is a devotional picture which shows us a scene we can well imagine probable in our Ladys life. It is the night of Good Friday, and Veronica brings her veil, with the impress of Jesus'. Face upon it to our Lady, Veronica has reverently brought It in a Casket, which she has given to one of her maids, while she herself holds the Image of the adorable Face before the Mother, at the sight the Magdalene falls prostrate, till Mary, in a voice so like the Lord's bids her arise. Silently, for a while, they venerate it, then Mary, ever thinking of others, bids John call those who are in the house, that they, too may feed their eyes upon that Face which they will one day look upon in Its glory, when having « fought the good fight », having « kept the faith », they stand before that dear Lord, to receive the everlasting Crown. Well for the faithful ones, who fight the battle of life, so that they may hereafter look into the Face of Jesus, as He bids them enter into the joy of their Lord. It is scarcely realized among the generality of Catholics in England, how the Countries of faith, teem with traditions and legends regarding our Lady, they all have their value by giving us some idea how closely the early Christians lived in union with our Lady. How different from the sects who have no knowledge of or love for her. Put the two things together; let us gather up these legends as well as use our common sense.

Would that the Protestants of the present day would realize this. Even the very few legends we have refered to, bring us nearer to Jesus. To look more clearly into the house of John, is to bring Mary to our minds.

She ever brings Jesus closer: it is her office. The scene which depicts Veronica bringing her Veil to the Mother of Sorrows impresses us deeply, as we dwell in thought upon it. What were those marks of the Precious Blood, to the fair white Lily of Israel? What was the sight of that Blood–stained Image to the Passion flower of the Precious Blood? What was the vision of that Countenance, white and worn, but ever sweet, to the loving John and the penitent Peter? The Mother stretches out her hands to take the Treasure and press it to her lips. It is but natural that Magdalen should fall prostrate, she dares not look till Marys gentle voice rouses her with words of comfort. Peter and John, with the holy women, gather around the Mother; for, from her goes out strength and consolation to all. No wonder God left Mary on earth so many years after the Asencion; her presence beautified the world and made lovely that world which had so disappointed Him that in the strange mysterious language of the Sacred record (language which we know can imply nothing of change in the mind of the Eternal), « It repented Him that He made man on the earth ». (Gen. VI. 6).

God could gaze on that fair Mirror, Mary, and see His own beauty reflected there.

How sweetly our Lady consoled the suffering; and, when she had comforted them, turned their thoughts to thank the God of all consolation. She taught them to seek all their relief and consolation from God. This is so often forgotten; we try to take pain patiently from the Hands of God, but we do not always kiss the hand gratefully when we have relief.

Why is this? God is the Author of all consolation. We should love Him more if we remembered this when

we obtain the relief our nature craves for. Mothers teach us to know God! Let us think what the tenderest mother can be and then think that God exceeds in the tenderness of His love the most loving of mothers.

The thing we should ever seeck for, to love God with our whole heart daily more and more it is our Lady's office, to teach us, to obtain for us.

Whether or not, our Lady ever excercised the power, she doubtless possessed, of healing deseases, we do not know; but it would seem unlike one so compassionate to see suffering and not to relieve it if she could.

Of this we are least certain, that if she worked miracles, she did it in the quietest and most hidden way; using her knowledge, which was immense, before any other means, so that what was miraculous might not appear so much so. From the simplicity with which she did all things, blessings which our Lady may have given were not noticed.

Praised be God for the creation of Mary, Virgin and Mother! Mother of Jesus, mother of the brethren of Jesus; Praised be Jesus for giving us this mother as our own!

How grateful were the Apostles that their master had left his mother to them! How thankful were the holy women, how grateful were the early Cristians for this gift.

Strange it is that our separated bretheren do not realise this. We wonder how they think to have behaved had they lived in the time of our Lord, and had mourned his death. Would they not have gone to his mother? Would they not have loved to thalk with her and hear all they could about the Saviour they so truly love?

We were speaking of our Lady and wondering if she used the powers, she undoubtedly possessed. We think she did, even unconsciously; but, that her love of hidden-

ness prevented her doing anything very manifest. She might apply some Relic, or remind the sufferer of the woman, who said « if she could but touch the hem of His garment, she whom she saw going about everywhere doing good, she should be healed ».

These things she may have done; but we need no telling to know that she would console those confided to her care. Who could comfort them as she could!

People who suffer, and suffer unselfishly, are confided in and have power with others. All who came to her knew that they could never realise how this sweet one had suffered; and yet, she spoke not of her own sorrows; her words dropped as balm on the wounded souls of others who poured out their griefs to Christ's mother; and they left her presence, contented, patient happy. They did what is too often overlooked, they tanked God. They went away grateful to God for Mary's presence among them. Have we hitherto thought enough of thanking God for our Mother Mary?

Are we grateful as we should be for this great gift? Let us begin at once. Do you know the legend of the Angel who was sent from heaven to pluck a flower from the garden of the Church! How gladly he went and how he returned, with a flower he had plucked from a loving soul?

The flower was gratitude. Our Lady's month in the Maternal world, is a month of flowers. Let our souls be full of flowers that the Angels may pluck for heaven. Let us cultivate blossoms of gratitude and earn a sweet smile from Mary for what we have done in her honor.

Mater Hominum - ora pro nobis!

XIV.

Our Lady with the Jewish Converts.

There is one phase of our Lady's life that we think of but little, and yet which must have formed a large part of her especial work for the first years of the Church her intercourse with those of her own nation who were either converts or were in greater or less degree touched by the Message delivered by the Apostles. We may be sure that she had an intense love for the Jewish race, not merely because they were her own but because they were the chosen people of God. What wonderful gifts the Holy Ghost had bestowed upon them, gifts of grace and knowledge, manifestations of merey and of judgment, miracles and prophecy. To that favoured people belonged the grand roll of the saints of the old Law; kings and prophets, priests and heroes; the glorious martyrs of the Machabean age; her own parents St. Joachim and St. Anne her spouse the dear St. Joseph, belonged like herself, to its royal house. The Mother's heart ever echoed the longing of her Son, as He mourned over the holy City: « O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have « gathered together thy children, as the hen doth her chic- « kens under her wings, and thou wouldest not » (S. Matth. XXIII, 37).

There were many, in spite of the national rejection of our Lord's claim, who were drawn torwards Him. We are told of those who, having seen His Death, went away smiting their breasts and saying no doubt, with the centurion. « Truly This was a just Man » (S. Luke XXIII, 48). The 120 in the Cenacle at Pentecost were that same day

increased by the conversion of 3000 souls (Acts II, 41); in a little while the converts number 5000 (Asts IV, 4); a few months more, and « the number of the disciples « was multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly: a great mul- « titude also of the priest obeyed the Faith ». (Acts. VI, 7). Many of these Jewish converts would come to Mary and gain fresh hope and strength as she spoke to them of the convenanted mercies of God, of His promise to Abraham and their fathers. She would explain to them how the Christ was to suffer and so enter into His Kingdom, bringing with Him those He had redeemed by His Passion and Death; she would tell them of the Church He had founded the Divine expansion of the Jewish Church, the new Israel of God for the salvation of the lost, and how that Church could not die, but would bring grace to all to the end of time.

As we look on those poor contrite Jews, how the glory of God is shown forth in their conversion! Some of them, many perhaps, had joined in the cry « Let Him be crucified » and yet for none had He done such wonderful works as He had done for that people. But no ingratitude in the past bars the way of contrition and penance. Our Mother would tell those poor souls how the deeper the dye of sin, the more glory to God in its pardon. Almost in despair they might be, but she would bid them look up to the Mercy that could never reject the poorest, feeblest act of contrition. The Mother of the Messias must know better than any what the love of the Saviour is; she could, better than any, lead them to Calvary and open to them the refuge of the Pierced Heart of Jesus. So they would learn, in their measure, to join the thanksgiving of her Magnificat. Thank God that He

lets us too join in that canticle of praise for His infinite mercies.

Our Lady with the Jews who thus came to her, teaches us this lesson. Many no doubt came with shame, their minds scarcely yet made up as to what they would do; many with characters Marred by hypocrisy, selfconceit, human respect, tainted in a way impossible for Gentiles with their far lesser graces. They were sorry, but not with the sorrow of Peter and Magdalene; they still stood aloof, in some degree at least. And yet the Mother had no reproach for them; she probably recognised some faces that she had seen among the crowd that shouted for our Lord's condemnation; but there was no shadow of resentment in her sinless Heart only intense longing and tender compassion.

Let us ask ourselves here, how much better are we, with our unnumbered graces, we, the children of the Church, than our separated brethren? Let us remember the awful downfall of the chosen people and learn, (God helping us), the lesson of holy fear. And if we are learning that lesson, we shall not dare to reproach, however deeply we may sorrow and fear for other's souls.

How Mary must have longed for the day when these converts should receive the regenerating grace of Baptism, and become children of the Kingdom of her Divine Son. And when they had become Christians, how she would love to teach them the mysteries of the Faith, the Sacraments of the New Law. They found in her the Sedes Sapientiae, the appointed Throne of the Wisdom of God. No theologian ever penetrated as she could beyond the wall of outward things to the eternal Realities-through earthly accidents to the very Substance hid from outward

vision. And how clearly would Mary explain to them that the work of grace depends on the cooperation of the receiver; and would strive to touch whomever she was instructing with that grace of graces-contrition.

It was not difficult to sorrow for sin in the presence of Mary, the Reflection of purity itself. A few words of Jesus, the telling of some incident of His Sacred Life or Passion, how these softened hard hearts, and how sweetly Mary's exile from the visible presence of her Son was consoled by these maternal offices. Could she have left this world with her Son? Would He have refused had she asked this? Scarcely, perhaps; but to make such a prayer was all unlike our Mother; her joy was simply to accept the office and the work, whatever they might be, that God appointed for her. The « Ecce » and the « Fiat » were her very life. Oh to live like her! To know that what we are doing is God's will and to do it with all our heart! We have the opportunity ever before us, but how grievously we miss it. This month we have in a special way entered on the Path of Mary a Path that leads through fields abundant in golden grain that may be gathered into God's garden. Let us not be idle, but reap that harvest, through our Mother's prayers and blessing, in the sunshine of God's love.

Let us learn to long, with her, for the restoration of God's ancient people, hoping against hope that they may be restored to His friendship and brought to His new Kingdom. The Light shone in the world, and the world knew it not. The Messias came unto His own, and His own received Him not. Give them that Light again. O Lord; may that people of Thy love be again Thine own work, this mighty wonder through her by whon Thou hast

done all of greatest good on earth, Thine Immaculate Mother Mary. Open their eyes to behold the king and Saviour Whom they crucified, and with the Vision of Thine Own Beauty let them see her loveliness who is the Glory of Jerusalem, the Joy of Israel, the Honour of the people of God (Judith XV, 10).

Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri, quemadmodum speravimus in Te. Converte nos, Deus salutaris noster. Memento congregationis Tuae, quam possedisti ab initio.

Sedes Sapientiae, Mater Boni Consilii, ora pro nobis.

XV.

Our Lady and the First Martyrs.

As we look upon the beautiful lives led together by our Lady and St. John, and strive to enter into them better by bringing before ourselves their surroundings, and the events that marked those first days of the Catholic Church, we are led to wonder how St. John told the Mother about the persecutions of those earliest times. There would be in her heart a divided feeling; intensest sympaty with the terrible sufferings of the martyrs and confessors, and at the same time a holy pride in these first flowers of the Passion. How she must have prayed for them, that they might be firm in confessing their Lord to the end; like the martyred mother of the Machabees, she the Queen of Martyrs, would urge on her children to offer up their lives for their holy Religion.

Two great martyrdoms marked her last years on earth.

St. Stephen, the first of all to follow his Lord through the Red Sea of His Passion; and St. James the Great, the only Apostle martyred before she went to her eternal glory. Her prayers, we cannot doubt, must have gone up mightily to heaven with those two victors, and earth and all of the white-robed army. She would rejoice unspeakably at these fresh Passion-flowers, taken to adorn the fields of Paradise to the greater glory of the Sacred Humanity, radiant in the offering of their own blood in union with the Precious Blood of Jesus.

We could imagine our Lady sending forth the martyrs with such words as the Church addresses to the departing spirit in her solemn Commendation: « Go forth, christian soul, in the Name of God »; or words in the spirit of those addressed to the French king, as he went to his death, murdered by miscreants that called themselves a government: « Son of St. Louis, ascend to heaven! » So the first martyrs would go forth to their conflict and triumph with our Lady's benediction and commendation to stengthen and console them.

And as our Mother and St. John prayed together for these atheletes in the arena of martyrdom, Calvary would come once more before them, the Passion of the king of Martyrs; and they would repeat His dying words, « Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do », and the rest of those Divine utterances He left us when.

« Seven times He spake, seven words of love,
And all three hours His silence cried
For mercy on the souls of men ».

Long would they dwell on each Word, with its wondrous revelation of the charity of the Sacred Heart. We

may well believe that Mary was the first to perform this devotion so dear surely to the Eternal Father, and that she left it as a legacy to her children. It would be well for us to follow this example.

A new glory will be given to the Father, and new graces gained for souls, as the Last Words of Jesus resound in His Church on earth; and the Divine melody, so solemn and so sorrowful, will unite the redeemed with the Passion of the Redeemer. Pope Leo XIII granted an indulgence of 300 days to their devout recitation with certain prayers; also to members of the Confraternity of Calvary (*). An indulgence of 300 days for reciting them with seven Gloria Patri and they are so recited at every meeting of the Confraternity. And in the Chaples of the Little Company of Mary the priest recites them before the Blessed Sacrament when exposed. Many special graces, we are sure, would be gained by the adoption of this devotion. When we find it hard to pray let us look upon our Lady and hear her speaking those wonderful Words that are too little thought of, and too soon forgotten.

We are not called to martyrdom; but everyone of us has suffering and temptation to meet and endure, and we too need our Mother's prayers and blessing and sweet encouragement. And our trials are those which those first Christians too had to bear. Not only outward trials, but spiritual suffering. We know how temptations against

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(*) The Calvary Confraternity is formed to aid souls in their last agony: first, and principally by prayer, and then, if possible, by personal assistance at the death bed. The Chief obligation imposed upon the members, is to pray for the Agonising. There is no special form of prayer necessary. This Confraternity was enriched with many Indulgences by this Holiness of happy memory Leo XIII.

Members are enroled in any Convent of the Little Company of Mary.

faith came even to our Lord's first disciples. We remember the sad despairing words of the two by whose side He walked on Easter Sunday on the way to Emmaus: « We hoped that it was He that should have redeemed Israel » (Lt. Luke XXIV, 21); we remember the sorrowful darkness in which for one whole week St. Thomas stayed amid all the glory of the Pasch.

How blessed for those early followers of the Lord that they had His Mother to go to.

We can imagine a poor soul, passing through that dark night of which St. Gregory tells us dark to the soul herself, but bright light in the sight of God when He allows the terrible temptation to try her of thinking she is not loved by Him and wil be surely lost we can imagine such a one coming to our Lady in her sorrow. A temptation like this St. Francis de Sales bore for a whole month, we are told. And we can hear the Mother repeating some word of Jesus with an unction that brings balm to the soul. « Be comforted, my child, you are dear to God. « Listen to your Saviour's: word's As the Father hath lo- « ved me, I also have loved you ». And then our Lady is silent, that the words may sink deep into the soul, that she may be strengthened and consoled.

So should we find if we went in faith to our mother's feet, and kneeling by her side repeated some words of our Blessed Lord, as though she herself had spoken them. This is an allowable and praiseworthy practice, and if found helpful to the soul we might cut a flower from the garden of Mary this month by its daily use a flower that we might confidently offer to her. Nothing draws us nearer to Jesus than devotion to our Lady; and true child like devotion will always lead us to her

company. To quiet our souls for a few minutes by a visit to her is certain to draw us closer to the Heart of Jesus. We are dwelling now on that part of her life when she was left on earth after our Lord's Ascension a time most profitable to dwell on, since it resembles this present age in being without the visible Presence of Jesus. But we cannot think of her apart from Him; to learn from her is to « learn of Him who is meek and humble of Heart » (S. Matth. XI, 29). And so we turn to her and try to watch her every movement, her every look, to catch the music of her sweet words. We watch her as an artist studies his model. We love her, we rejoice in her, we are proud of her; we know that the Queen of Martyrs has consolation and blessing for us no less than for the sufferers of the first days of Holy Church; and we offer up our poor prayers by her side, joining them to her glorious intercession, knowing that she has but to ask, and she receives from her Divine Son.

Mary, The Chosen Instrument of the Holy Ghost, did not allow Her powers to lie dormant, she was ever ready to see and aid all who came to Her; it was no effort to her, for as she had always loved her people with the intense love of her Virgin Heart, she loved them still more when she had become their Mother on Calvary. They were indeed to her the images of God, and it was from her as, first, from her Divine Son, that St. John learnt that love for the brethren that breathes in every line of his writing. No wonder he could say, « If any man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not? And this command-

ment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother ». (St. John I, cap. IV, 20, 21).

He had lived so long with the « Mother of fair love », he had watched her, so fair fragile, yet ever unwearied in her constant intercorse with God's Family, ever fresh, ever sweet, ever interested in all; the One perfect being, the earth has produced lived a life, which in its wonderful love for those around, showed the intensity of her love of God.

She was perfect in every state of her beautiful earthly life; perfect as the daughter of SS. Joachim and Anne; Perfect Mother of the God-Man, and of all mankind. Mary. Immaculate, fulfilled the various offices assigned her by God, and was perfect in each; and the Divine complacency finds expression in those words of the prophet «Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is no spot in Thee; one is my dove, my perfect one is but one ». (Can. IV, 7; VI, 8).

We have been gazing in spirit on our Lady, as she might have appeared to us, had we lived in that happy period, which we are now considering, but we can only catch an occasional glimpse of her beautiful soul, and the workings of that magnificent Heart, just as when travelling we get a momentary view of some magnificent landscape in the brief intervals between the tunnels; still we love to think of our Lady's wonderful interior life, which was mirrored in her exterior.

What were her thoughts for instance, as she followed some soul to Purgatory? What did she feel as she gave a great Apostle to Heaven? Only one, St. James, died before she did, but there must have been many Martyrdoms and beautiful deaths, in those early days that were

indeed as a spiritual birth, a birth to Life Eternal, which would cause her joy to overflow.

We do not think it likely that Our Lady would be present at the Martyrdoms, which may have taken place during her sojourn in Jerusalem, after the Ascension St. John would not wish her, and his word would be law to Mary, who loved obedience.

The Mother of the Lamb Who was led to the slaughter, and opened not His mouth, lived in spirit with her Son; Mary obeyed so simply what St. John said, that it was scarcely observable, for all virtue sat so easily and gracefully on Our Lady, where we from want of habitual practice, are often awkward, and ill-at ease.

St. John would certainly have kept our Lady, from witnessing any of those harrowing sights that would remind her too much of Calvary, but he would always come and relate the circumstances, knowing that grace was so strong in her soul, that it reigned supreme, and she would rejoice in the fidelity of these holy ones, under persecution, and torments, even unto death.

Can we imagine how Mary's soul rejoiced over the first martyr, St. Stephen? His trial, sufferings were made known to Her, either naturally, or supernaturally. Some of the disciples would tell Her of the glorious end, for that vision of Jesus, at the hour of death, gave a special beauty to the Martyrdom of St. Stephen, the first Passion flower of earth, making it shine with a special radiance. The blood offered for the Precious Blood shed, the life given for the Life taken.

St. Stephen, we rejoice with you in your glory, we rejoice with Our Lady in the joy you were to Her Maternal Heart. Pray for us, that like you we may give

life for life. Pray for us, that we may give our blood as we perform our daily duties.

Ye Poor, beloved of God, you give your blood, as you give your daily will, that is if you unite those labours by a voluntary offering to the adorable will of God.

Queen of Martyrs, be our stay and our comfort in all suffering. Pray for us that nothing may lead us from our loyalty to Jesus and to you, dearest Mother of His brethren!

XVI.

Our Lady and the Shepheards.

The mutual charity existing between the early Christians was very wonderful. Those who had taken part in the tremendous Tragedy of the Passion were bound together by a more than common tie. Can we imagine the intercourse between those who had actually witnessed that Marvellous manifestation of the love of Jesus, that love, greater than which no man hath? Those who had suffered so much, together, could not fail to have a wondrous union; there was a tenderness, a compassion for one another, and anxiety to do all they could to please one another. They were so constantly near our Lady, and were prized by her, as being purchased by the Precious Blood, and she alone would have instilled into them this reverential feeling this sense of sacredness which keeps mutual love bright in the hearts of those who live together, and yet might naturally rub against one another, in the course of daily life, if they did not see in each other, the Image of God Who had become man, and

appeared on earth, « being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man ». (Phil. II. 7).

As we have said, there was in the early Christians an instructive reverence for one another. They realized those words. « Whatsoever you do unto the least of these My brethren, ye do unto Me ».

And they shrank from giving pain, while they hastened to do little services for one another. Thus let us picture them, and we may learn, how we also can leave good inpressions after us by our loving Charity in word and deed. Those who were converted, at that epoch, all bore the same stamp and the saying was a common one, as the heathen pointed them out, « See, how these Christians love one another ».

Sometimes these first Christians, would meet together and Mary would love to watch their courtesy and kindness to one another, and would lead them to talk upon some topic which would prove of absorbing interest. It is easy to imagine that one of the Shepherds who had visited the Infant Jesus at Bethleham, would if in Jerusalem come to see our Lady and we may picture such an interview. Perhaps some neophyte was present, and our Lady would say who this was and how he had come from minding his flocks at the Angel's bidding adore the Infant Jesus. She would only say a few words herself, but sufficient to start the conservation, which would increase faith and love in the hearts of the hearers, as they listened to the account of that wondrous night. St. John would hear of it often, but he would never tire of it, and wove into his Gospel, in few words, as the shepherd described the stable, « He came, unto His own, and His own received him not » (Joh I, 11).

The hearers would listen breathlessly, as they learnt how the shepherds had found Jesus, with Mary, His Mother. She was there, present, and they needed not to speak of her, she had changed but little, so they spoke of St. Joseph, and this touched her heart, and yet another offering of her sorrow would go up to God.

How she had missed him, she felt it more now than when he first left her, and it was one of the joys to look forward to in Heaven, to see again and to be united with her glorious Spouse, St. Joseph. The shepherds, perhaps, would also speak of the Angels' Hymn, and how they were allowed to hold the Baby Jesus, in their arms, and they might even mention the poor little gifts they brought the Holy child and His Mother, either on the night itself, or afterwards. They would occasionally turn to our Lady, and with a wistful look they would ask, « Did John know Mother, what would be the after-fate of your Divine Child? ». Then Mary would explain, how plainly it was foretold in the Scriptures, by Isaias, and the other prophets; the former describes the Passion with a vividness of detail, almost as if he had been an eyewitness of the terrible scene, « But how could you live, Mother? We could scarce have borne it, my comrades and I, had we known the future, when we held the Divine Child, in our arms, and loved and adored Him ». Then turning to those who were listening so eagerly, « If you had only seen the Eyes of the Son of God, made Man, bent upon you. Then we did not understand the mystery of Redemption, and knew not that that beauteous Babe would be taken, stretched upon a tree, and nailed to its wood. The God of Abraham, Isaae and Jacob gave us that night, consolation without alloy ».

« It was well » said Mary, « and I was glad, that, when you brought the little lamb, as your offering, you knew not my Infant would be sacrificed, led to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers He was Dumb ». (Isaias III, 7).

Mary spoke thus, in her utter unselfishness, ever forgetful of her own grief, but ever thinking of, and for others. Mother! May we imitate Thee, and thus sweeten the journey of life, by our thought, our love for others!

Perhaps the dear Magdalen was present at this scene, listening with eager attention, for every word about the early life of Jesus and was precious, and if not too improbable to suppose that one or other of the wise kings might make their way again to Jerusalem, to visit that favoured spot, now hallowed by the presence of the Mother of Jesus. They would possibly bring rare presents, as they had done before, which our Lady would graciously accept, and put aside to give away, as we are told by the commentators, she must formerly have done, at Bethlehem, otherwise she would hardly have offered the doves, in the Temple, at the Presentation, for that was the gift of the very poorest.

The Kings had offered rich gifts at the stable, soon and secretly, she must have given them away, letting her public offering be one of humility.

Let us return to the Magdalen, she eagerly drank in all the shepherds related, every word was precious that told something fresh about the life of Jesus.

Ah! If she had, in her earlier years, only known Incarnate Purity and Holiness, would she have sinned?

We are striving to make mental pictures of those whom we can easily imagine would visit our Lady in the Houes

f St. John, and to consider the scenes that might have een enacted there. There are those, whom we read of s connected especialy with the Birth of Jesus, such as ne shepherds and the Kings. They were all so different nd yet all so alike, for all were animated with that one pirit, immense, overwhelming love for Jesus and Mary, nd a mutual love for one another. They could not have urt one another's feelings by unkind words, as we so often o. They had suffered too much, and there was a sym-athy, and union between them, closer than that of blood elationship.

Yes, for they were bound together in the Precious Blood of Jesus; Many of them had seen It shed, others ad visited the holy places, and to many Our Lady show-d the relics of the Precious Blood, which she posses-ed, such as the Thorns, tinged with the Precious Blood, hrough pressing into the Sacred Head. Even to the pre-ent day, the Church possess, these relics, and brings hem forth, from time to time, for the veneration of the aithful, who gaze in adoring reverence, and are brought closer to our Lord, by the veneration of those sacred ob-ects that have touched the Body of Jesus. This practice of piety, of devoutly visiting the relics of the Passion, should help us to draw closer to our Lord in our pray-ers and meditations. We hope too, that the thoughts we are now presenting to our readers, will help them to ap-proach in spirit to the Saints, by making them realize that they were living beings of flesh and blood like ourselves. They are sometimes, considered and spoken of, by worldly people, as characters in fiction or poetical creations might be, not as if they really lived on our poor fallen earth. We want to get rid of such false romantic ideas, and to

come face to face with the fact that those men and women living in the first century of the Christian era, were human beings, like ourselves, highly favoured, it is true, with God's grace, and corresponding with it until they arrived at a high degree of perfection. It was left to their free-will, as it is left to ours, either to use the talent, given and put it out, for interest, or else to hide it in a napkin. And God's Holy Angels were ever near to help them as they are ever near to us to make use of the graces He so freely gives.

Let us look again at this group, which, in imagination we see gathered around our Most Blessed Mother. They are all different, so many various characters, Mary Magdalen, Martha, Lazarus, Veronica, Nicodemus, not to speak of the Apostles; but there are many others, mentioned in Holy Scripture, in connection with Our Lords sacred Life and Passion, such as the centurion Longinus, and the holy women, who would in all likelihood find their way to our Lady's humble home. We have already spoken of the shepherds, and we can easily imagine the wondrous joy in Mary's heart, her spouse the Holy Ghost rejoicing in her, as they returned to salute her, whom they had first revered, long ago, in the stable at Bethlehem as they recognised in all the want and lowly poverty that surrounded them, the Infant-Son of God, and His Immaculate Mother. Truly they were after Our Lady's own heart, whom The Church calls the « Mother of Holy Hope », and they were indeed « Blessed », because they had believed, and as many traditions tell us, they sealed that faith and hopee by their blood, and won the Martyr's Crown.

XVII.

Our Lady with the Leper's wife.

Amongst others who came to our Lady for comfort and council, was a woman upon whose face, care was marked in an unusual degree. If there were many waiting to see our Lady, she would wait till the last, and then, in whispered accents full of fear, pour out her dread that her husband had the terrible disease of leprosy. Mary listened, for her heart was ever touched by others'sorrow. Indeed, it was the greatest pain of Mary's life to see others suffer. There are many souls, who are sensitive to the sufferings of others, and who long for Heaven, to see all around them happy, but Mary had had the sorrow, unlike all other, of seeing Her God, who was Her Son, in pain and anguish; this we can ever approach to, for verily and indeed there was no sorrow like unto hers, except the Sorrow of the Sacred Heart Itself.

It made her feel more for others, and the poor wife's grief and apprehension touched her deeply; she knew well what the anticipation of some great catastrophe to one we love is like. Imagine, reader, what your feelings would be, if you knew, that, at some period, in the life of one you love, they would meet with a terrible railway accident; would you not be ever in dread, for you know not when it is to be? You would be ever expecting it; you would see your loved one leave the house, and would ask yourself, will he or she ever return, and how? Think what the strain of this would be, and you will understand our Lady's pity for the poor woman, who knew the terrible trial that must eventually come.

The compassion of the Mother's Heart gave comfort to the poor wife, who felt there was some one to sympathize with her.

She had asked it of no one, for her secret had to be kept, that no one might know how the terrible disease had seized her husband; till one day, bitter cries were heard and she ran into the room, with a baby in her arms, and the desperate anguish on her face of one to whom the last shock, had been more then she could bear.

St. John looked anxious, but Our Lady took the child from the woman's arms, and tried to soothe her. « Has it come to the worst? » Mary asked.

« They have taken him, my husband is declared a leper, and they will take my child, my babe. How God has strickened Me, Oh! my God, my God! »

Our Lady wept, the silent tears streamed down, and Her lips moved in prayer, before she attempted to speak, and the poor afflicted wife continued, « Oh! if you had seen the look he cast at me, as they led him off, and then as his children followed in the distance, whom he might never touch again or fondle as he used, he cast a look of anguish at them and me. I grew dizzy, I saw no more and shall never see him again ».

Whiter grew Mary's face, more anxious that of St. John, would she faint? Ah! no, that she never did, but her Heart who almost over-burdened. He knew of what She was thinking; of Jesus' look at Her, as they met on the Way to Calvary. In all her bitter agony, she had not lost consciousness. Ah! no, she felt each pang, the sword piercing deeper and deeper; she was spared nothing by unconsciousness.

St. John arose, and came near the poor woman, and

he blessed her, for he was the Priest of God. It was his place, for he was his Master's representative.

« Be comforted, poor afflicted one », be said. « Be patient in this day of the Visitation of God. God's visits are for our sanctification; He chastises those whom He loves. Behold, the Mother of Jesus, see how She feels for you, because She knows what you suffer. He spared not His Beloved Mother, whom He loved above all creatures, and to whom He had given grace excelling all others. Her grief is — St. John could not finish — « Look » he said.

The poor afflicted woman looked up at the Immaculate One, who held the infant, up to Heaven, and prayed, « Save this child, let not the scourge fall upon it. Bless and spare this family, by the Blood of Jesus ». Our Lady looked at St. John, who continued speaking, « You know, of old, that when the Blood of the Paschal Lamb was sprinkled on the door-post, the Angel of God's Justice passed the houses of those whose doors were marked with the blood. So now the Blood of Christ appeases the Justice of the Eternal Father, and draws the mercy of God, upon this earth. To morrow, I will offer the sacrifice of the New Law, for you and yours. God will bless your family, nay, you are already blessed; « then, turning to our Lady, « Mother, will you repeat the words of Jesus? »

Our Lady spoke those words, She loved so well, « Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted ». « You have every sign of God's benediction, resting upon you, for your husband mirrors Him, who for love of man, became » as a leper, and as one, struck by God? (Isaias LIII, 4). You have the cross, the sign of salvation, therefore, be at peace. Very soon, God will take your loved

one to Himself; but this infant and your family will escape the scourge. So, be consoled », and the sweet sensitive soul of Mary seemed to pour itself out in its desire to bring peace and comfort to this sorrow-stricken one.

We can hardly realize what it was to Mary to see another in suffering, St. John knew better than most, and he was constantly harrowed and anxious at seeing how she felt for all, and suffered with their sorrows. St. John often had to make this an offering to His Master, and the « Fiat » was sometimes hard to say. To see one, we love in suffering requires perhaps the highest act of resignation to the Divine Will, that, God exacts from His faithful servants. This sorrow comes to all, but do we offer it up, with all the power that grace gives us, united with a firm resolve not to flinch, even at this most severe suffering, this offering God asks of us? Let us pray for grace, to reflect on earth, the life of Jesus and Mary, and let us also remember that it is a great sign of His love for us, that He caused His Mother so much pain, in His Life and Death, in expiation for our sins, and that Mary, God's sinless flower, received Jesus, from His Father, with intense gratitude, and offered Him, Her Beloved, for love of God, and love of us, His erring children.

« Oh! we love Thee, Mary,
Trusting all to Thee,
What is past and present,
What is yet to be ».

« What is yet to be ». Yes! What is yet to be? Prepare for that misty future, not with sinking heart, but with a glad hope, We know not what will befall us, in that dim future, but let us make a great act of faith and hope,

that whatever may happen is permitted by God, and permitted for our good. From all eternity we were in the mind of God, and His Designs for us are all benevolence and love; let us not frustrate them.

Our Lady continued to the poor woman « You could have No greater sign of God's love, and that you and yours are of the elect, than that your dear one, should so mirror the Son of the Father's love.

Be comforted, your sorrow will be turned into joy, and your joy no one may take from you. Radiant and beautiful will your husband stand before his God, and upon that poor afflicted mortal frame will be placed the robe of immortal glory ».

The sobs of the wife subsided, the other women, who had followed her, wiped the tears from their eyes and they knelt down, and at a sign from our Lady, St. John came forward and commenced a prayer, in which all present joined, responding to the beautiful Psalms as we do now, the « Miserere », or « De profundis », or some other, most applicable and well known to the people; then reverentially they bowed their heads, as he gave them His blessing, and then quietly left the house, taking the poor woman with them.

St. John's attitude, all through, had been that of the Priest, thoroughly engrossed in his priestly duties; his face wore that earnest unworldly saintly look, that we see in the faces of God's good Priests, to the present day. St. John was Our Lady's Priest, a title many crave to bear, who wish to follow in his steps, and take Mary as their own.

That look faded away to one of anxiety as he saw the blanched face of Mary. « Mother, it has been too much for you » « And you, my son, did you not think of

that way to Calvary, and how 'as a lamb led to the slaughter, He opened not His Mouth'? » Well, full well, did St. John remember the stones and jibes, and how he had striven to protect our Lady that day, when Jesus was hooted as a leper. It had brought the remembrance to St. John, as well as to our Lady, but while engaged in the task of comforting the sorrowful he had not felt it as he did now. How he had, on that saddest, most terrible Friday of his life, to command himself and not to be unmanned, and now, as the sorrow came up freshly before them he broke down. For a while they sat silently, together, St. John, at Our Lady's feet, and bowed his head that she might not see his grief, but she knew well what he suffered: « My son, it is over, let us thank God, that that sorrow of Jesus is finished, that He will never again, appear in agony, but John, without that Passion you would not have had your Mother ».

John looked up for the tone had changed, her face wore that wonderful radiant look he knew so well; the look Mary may have worn, when she appeared to the shepherdess, Bernardette, and said « I am the Immaculate Conception ». She knew the Power of God had bestowed this prerogative upon Her, and the old « Magnificat » welled up, again, from the most grateful of human hearts.

The beloved Mother and the beloved disciple of Jesus glorified their God, and what a joy this world was to the Most High, as He gazed on those two mortal beings, who though on earth were leading lives that rivalled those of the just in Heaven, in their Purity and Love. Oh God! we rejoice that Thou dost receive such glory from this earth; we also would lead noble lives, pure and chaste detached and « unspotted from this world ».

Mother, help us to be holy. We will impress these pictures of loveliness on our minds, that we may desire in our degree to lead lovely lives. Look at our Lady, look at St. John, precious fruits of Christ's Passion. We will love what is so beautiful. Speak O God! speak to my heart! Speak, Lord! For thy servant heareth. What Thou desirest of me, that will I do, Thy grace helping me.

Mother, receive me, as Thine own! St. John teach me to do as thou didst, to live with Mary, according to the desire of Jesus, honouring His Mother's Heart.

XVIII.

Our Lady, with a young Man, who neglected to folluw Ous Lord.

The numerous couversions of the first days of Christianity were, without doubt a great joy to Our Lady, surpassing far that which an ordinary mother feels, when her child is born into the world; for with a greater love than any earthly mother, however tender, Mary offered Her spiritual children to Jesus, again and again.

Oh! that we could understand the Perfection of Mary's Maternity. We measure it by our own cold hearts, and fall short. She speaks to us with all the authority and sweet. ness of Her office, telling us « I am your Mother by God appointed: » and still we doubt Her power or Her will or both, to help us; for we appear to hug certain selfish sorrows, with an unaccountable despondency.

If we really believe that the immense love of our God has given His earthly children a Mother of their own race, but possessing Heavenly powers, why do we not appeal and trust to Her more? Let us look upon those

early Christians, as one after another they come to Her. Some are led by their own instinct, others the Apostles have sent; but all are wanting to hear of Jesus, all are needing the Mother's help, and all receive it. All who were able to visit Her, did so, for it was impossible that those who had known and loved Jesus would not prize every opportunity of visiting His Mother, while she was spared to them.

Ah! poor Protestants, how we pity you in your delusion, and wonder at it. Had you been in Jerusalem in those days, would you not have gone with the other Christians to visit the Mother of the Christ, whom all loved so, and lay your griefs and faults and frailties before her?

We think you would, even as did many another in those days. One came to Our Lady, with a sad tale. He had had it in his power to see and speak with Jesus of Nazareth, but the dread of human opinion had prevented him. Now he came in sorrow and remorse to Our Lady, and said to Her, « Oh! Lady, I have no excuse, I did indeed believe in Him, but yet I went not out to see Him. Shame kept me back, and the up braidings of my family, as well as my own pusillanimous nature held me as in a vice. I have never seen Him, Whom so many sought to see, Whom I could have seen daily. Woe is me! Now it can never be. I shall never see Him, the Messias, the promised Saviour; the Heavens have dropped down dew, and the earth has budded forth a Saviour, but alas! He will not be a Saviour to me; for I held back in the acceptable time: the day of Salvation for me has passed ».

« Nay, not so », spoke the sweet voice of Many, « for

NOW is the acceptable time, NOW is the day of Salvation. You will see Him in Heaven, in His Glory, sitting at the right Hand of the Father; His beauty above all that can be imagined on earth, but you can also see His Effigy here; He has left it to His Church as a precious legacy. Kneel; my son: »

Our Lady sounded a little bell and St. John entered and asked « Mother, do you want me? »

« John, my son », said Our Lady, « I want to show His FACE to one who longs to see Him ».

St. John went to the other end of the room, and the young man watched him kindling a lamp; then opening a casket. The light flickered on a face of wondrous sweetness, and intense pain.

« Who is this », he queried.

« It is JESUS of NAZARETH », answered St. John, and in a lower tone he added » there is His Mother ».

The young man looked from the Sacred Face to that of Mary.

What surrounded it? What lit it up like that? Was it the light of the lamp? It seemed a reflection of the Divinity; love shone out from that sweet face, as the Mother's eyes gazed on the Sacred Countenance of Jesus.

« The Messiah and His Mother, » murmured the young man. There was silence in the room, St. John was absorbed in prayer, Mary's soul full of Love, silently communed with Jesus, and the young man, gazing in deep reverence on the Sacred Face, hardly knew himself. What was it? he could almost have asked himself if he was in the world, or out it: what was this that was filling his heart in this marvellous way? Might he speak? He looked at St John, who still prayed, then he turned to Our Lady,

and found her eyes bent on him; moved by an impulse of Divine Grace, he rose from the place where he had gone to see the Sacred Face better, he returned to her side, and said « I am Christ's: tell me what I am to do, how can I enter His service? I seek His Kingdom only; this world is naught to me now that I have seen His Face, and adored Him as my King. If He will accept my service I offer my life to Him; but, Lady, permit me to ask whence comes that Face; it seems too marvellous to have been wrought by human hands? »

Then Our Lady told him the tale of that noble woman whose rightful name is almost forgotten by the Christian world, since her act of heroic love won for her the better title of Veronica (Vero Icon) or true Image, telling as it does, at once, the story of her brave deed, and its exceeding great reward.

Thus did Mary, tell the young man of Veronica's compassion, when she saw the Face of Jesus covered with blood and earth, bruised from His falls; how, regardless of shame, and human respect, or womanly timidity, she pushed through the crowd, urged only by her compassionate heart, till she met Jesus, and wiped His Sacred Face with her veil.

Then the young man spoke, hoarsely and in a broken voice, « Oh! brave woman, and I so cowardly! » but Our Lady did not wish him to indulge in unhealthy remorse, which is always so dangerous to souls, and which all ages will deplore in the case of Judas, and she went to point out God's love in this event, « See », said she, « The goodness of God; we do a little for Him and He does much for us, when Veronica looked again upon her veil, she found impressed upon it this Image which I have ex-

osed to you, and which will be a relic that all ages will enerate. Veronica brought it to me and we treasure it ere, you shall see it again when you are one of His ollowers. You regret that you did not follow Him in ife, but you will follow Him now that He has died for ou; and God's condescension will shine out more glo- iously in your conversion; and His sweet prerogative of Mercy will be manifested in you. You are pardoned, but ou must go and show yourself to His priests, that you nay be received into that Church that Christ founded on earth, that you must do without delay. Procrastination nd vacillation are fatal; what harm have they not brought n this earth. There was a time when God reigned in his world, supreme; there was a time when two beings were flooded with joy inexpressible; they breathed joy, their words were filled with love and joy, every sense was satisfied; they were radiant with happiness; but when he tempter came they vacillated. Fatal vacillation! for through it they fell. There was another moment when Jesus, my Son, stood before the Roman Governor, Pilate, He spoke to him words of grace, but Pilate hesitated; and through that fatal vacillation, through that weakness of human respect, Pilate also fell; he condemned the Innocent Lamb of God to death. You, my son, by a special grace have repented your fault, that weakness which prevented you following Jesus in His mortal Life. He has had compassion on you, you are pardoned and I repeat to you those words He used on earth, when He forgave sin, « Go and sin no more ». Break with those ties that bound you, in that appalling thraldom, for you were not happy in your weakness. You would indeed have been happy had you been firm: God created you for happiness.

The first step is taken now, and you will henceforth confess Christ bravely; may you never look back again, may you be willing even to lay down your life sooner than deny your faith ».

« May it be so, Lady », gravely anrwered the youth, « I would indeed rather cease to live, than not to live for Him, Who has given me life. My people are no longer anything more to me, for I am a Christian, and I will follow Christ ».

« By His grace, my son », gently said Our Lady, « always by His grace, ever saying I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me ».

Dear Reader, let us learn a lesson, as we listen in the spirit to Our Lady, warning us of the evil that, weakness of human respect can do. How many there are, oh! bow very many in these days, who have received a light, an ispiration from God, which they will not correspond with. Alas! they have gone so far that they cannot go back to where they were before the light shone on them, they no longer think, as they did once, that all within the Church of Rome is bad: no, the light was too strong, it streamed out on the darkness, revealing the beauty of the tempest–tossed Church, and they perforce acknowledge that the Truth is there. Yet, though they say « You are right », they will not own that they are wrong; very often it is human respect that keeps them back from professing their Faith, or else the love of kith and kin; sometimes the love of the old traditions of the creed in which they were born or brought up, that forms their greatest obstacle. It is sad, indeed, when they cannot break with it.

People of God! be not ensnared by this fatal error; you may deceive others, you may strive to deceive your-

selves, but you cannot deceive God. If you follow not the light vouchsafed to you, there is the terrible danger that you will be lost, eternally. Consider what the early Christians gave up; many of them had been of the number of God's chosen people, for Truth Itself had said « Salvation is of the Jews ». Have any of the many sects, into which the Protestant Religion is divided, the same grounds for calling themselves the « chosen people of God » that the Jews have, have any of them such time honoured traditions to part with?

No; you, who thus trifle with the light God has given you, cannot seriously think that you are the special people of God's predilection, yet you cling so tenaciously to your tenets. You hunger after the « flesh pots of Egypt » It is so sad to see some souls, who instead of desiring to believe, put the light away from them, trying to persuade themselves that it is not on account of the « flesh pots of Egypt », but that some higher reason makes them hesitate. Perhaps their chief obstacle is the fear of paining those they love; the dread of breaking the ties of flesh and blood, they shrink from owning that those they loved were in the wrong; or it may be as we have mentioned elsewhere, by some peculiar mode of reasoning they imagine they are unfaithful to the memory of their dead, if they follow their convictions, and give up the creed in which they were born, as if by such an act they condemned their loved ones.

Can any mistake be sadder than this? They forget that those who have not recieved the same light, will not be held accountable by the All-Just God; and that if they were baptized, and lived up to their convictions through invincible ignorance, they died in a sense within

the « pale of the Church ». The Catholic Church claims as her children all tho se who are not culpably resisting Her, or wilfully blinding them selves to Her light; therefore those who believe She is the Church of God, are bound te enter Her, and by so doing they do not separate themskeves from those who are gone before; but they run the risk of doing so if they continue to resist the known Truth.

Holy Mother, pray for us that we may never be unfaithful to grace, never turn our back on the Light of God. Pray for those whose conviction leads them to the One true Church of your Divine Son, and who yet hold back through fear, or pride, or human respect. Pray that through loyalty to the call of Jesus they may find rest to their souls in His Kingdom of peace.

XIX.

The " Disciple who walked no more with Jesus „.

« This saying is hard, and who can hear it?
And they walked no more with Him ».
(John, VI; 61, 67).

One day among a crowd of people who flocked to Our Lady's abode, moved both by devotion and curiosity, there was one who touched Her Heart with a special compassion, She saw that restless unhappy look, that those wear who have lost the great grace of their lives, either their faith or their vocation. She spoke sweetly and kindly to all, and took extra notice of this particular man, as far as She could, for he kept as much as possible in the back ground.

« You are unhappy, my poor man », She said to him,

« I am » he replied, « I have neither hope nor faith in anything ».

« And therfore you are wanting in love », said Our Lady.

« I see nothing in those around to love, « said the man », Once I loved a kind Master, and had faith in Him, but it is now gone ».

The people around Our Lady had gradually withdrawn to other parts of the room, for Our Lady had many things in her apartment, that the devout Christians of those days, were anxious to see.

Our Lady spoke low, and the man rather muttered than uttered vords.

« Where is that Master now? » asked Our Lady.

« I know not », said the man, « but I speak of Jesus of Nazareth, your Son, I know not where He is, bur you, perchance, could tell me ».

The Holy Name of Jesus had softened the man, and his voice was husky, as he continued, « Oh! How I loved Him, never had my heart throbbed with such love; brightness was all around me, light and love; the air breathed something not of this world, ad now all is utterly changed »

« But why », said Our Lady, « Is all so changed? » Did your Master become less loveable ?

« No, but His sayings were hard, and we could not stand them ».

« So, poor man », continued Our Lady, « you walked no more with Him ».

« Who, indeed could take such words as He spoke? » asked the man, and the rough manner; which had seemed softened, returned again, « all He did was good and kind,

but His sayings were hard and difficult to understand, and I left Him ».

« You left Him », said Our Lady, « YOU left Him, it is true, for HE leaves no one; the hand that is placed in His, He Holds fast, He does not withdraw His. You walked hand in hand with Him once, and then you let go His Hand, you withdrew, and walked no more with Him. Oh! I grieve for you! »

« The hard face of the man grew softer, and there was a trembling of the lips », What could I do when His sayings were so hard, so strange? there were others with me. He said to us, « Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have Life in you ».

« They said to me, How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat? I listened, Lady, and I answered, This is a hard saying and who shall hear it? and from that day we left Him, and walked no more with Him. Oh! Those walks, those walks; my mind reels round, and my heart sinks, as I remember those walks with Jesus of Nazareth, your Son; the Most Beautiful among the Sons of Men, Whom you brought forth. Beautiful, indeed beyond compare, but why did He speak such words, that we could not understand ».

The man's heart and manner were softened, Our Lady's influence was on him, he looked round the room, but all had withdrawn. St. John with his usual tact and gentle feeling had taken the rest away, leaving Our Lady and the poor man alone. Our Lady spoke more clearly and the poor man listened subdued; it seemed as if a ray of hope shone on him, as if the peace and joy, he once had enjoyed, might return again.

« You speak of Jesus as man, only, forgetting He was

also truly God. He created you and brought you into this world, which He made, beautiful as it is, out of nothing. He redeemed you from your sins by His death, His bitter Passion, and then when He ascended to Heaven in all His Glory, He still remained with His Church, in that wonderful manner of which He spoke to you, when you thought His sayings so hard. You will learn more later of the wonderful way in which He dwells with His loved creatures, becoming in reality the food of their souls. Do you still doubt His power, or His love and tenderness? ».

« Ah, Lady, your words reproach me, when I think of what He ever was ».

« Was He not ever kind and loving? » asked Our Lady.

« He was in act, always, it was His sayings we found hard, and as you know I, with others, left Him, but have never felt peace till now.

With Him I had peace in joy, now I feel I can obtain peace, even in my sorrow; because I yielded to what was said to me, and now I want to believe His sayings, I want to believe His Word, even if I understand it not. Lady, you who are His Mother, explain to me, tell me ».

« Many », said Our Lady, « understood not His Word, but they did not therefore leave Him. Pray as others have, I believe, O Lord, help Thou my unbelief ».

The stern, stubborn nature of the old man seemed changed and softened by Our Lady's sweet influence, the restiveness was gone, and as a lamb he listened to her gentle voice, and the old love of His Master revived as he spoke with His Mother.

Would that many poor souls who have drifted away from the faith, knew and realised this truth that to find

Jesus they must first seek His Mother. Poor England! When you come back again to the feet of Mary, She will enkindle your faith, and sorrow, you will return to the bosom of the Church, humbled indeed, but with the peace of sorrowful love, of a contrite heart. You lost faith in the Blessed Sacrament and Mary, they will return together, for « they found the Child, with Mary His Mother ».

« You now feel », said Our Lady, « how easy it is to be deluded, you know now that you lost your faith, and, for the time being, your Vocation; I say, for the time being, for thanks be to God, there is nothing too late in this world of mercy. You will now fulfil the mission your Master gave you; and having learnt your own weakness, you will be gentle with others. God will be compassionate to you ». As though he had risen from a dreadful dream the man looked at Our Lady, saying, « Pray for me, Lady, for I am not werthy. Lord, I am NOT worthy. How shall I teach others the faith, who have been so faithless? ».

Our Lady silently offered up a thanksgiving for that soul, that had « been snatched from the snare, as a sparrow, from the nets of the fowler ». The old man continued, « Would that I had not listened to the words of those, who ridiculed the teaching of the Just One. I was older than they », and as Our Lady, looked at him, he added », but not so old as you might think. Lady, my locks have grown white, from the agony I have endured night and day. I had no peace, for I would see His beautiful Eyes, as He bent them on me, when He would call me by name, and I would put my hand in His, and thus we walked through the corn–fields together. He spoke such beauteous things of the Eternal Father, creating the

world, of His love for the world that He had made, how He had blessed it, and our hearts burned within us as He spoke. We longed to see the Father, and looked forward to the day when we should be admitted to His presence, by death; and then when we had parted how I dreaded Death! I dreaded the Eternal Father, of Whom He had spoken as all goodness and love. I could only see Him as one who would punish us in anger: still I did not turn back to Christ, my Saviour. Would that I had! but when I doubted one thing that He spoke, all the rest seemed cloudy. Then when I left Him, I cared for nought else, but sought distraction and forgetfulness in sin. How can I now work for Him, Whom I have so grievously offended? How can I preach to others, who am myself a deserter?

« You have not lost your vocation, the good Shepherd has followed you, you will imitate Him, and go as He did, to seek and save the lost sheep, and the more you copy, the more you resemble, the Life of the Son of His love, the more will you endear yourself to your Father, Who is in Heaven ».

« But I have lost so much by my infidelity », he said.

« It is true », said Our Lady, « but it is also true, that you will have gained more than you have lost, for you will have a knowledge of human weakness, that will help you in your work for the souls of others. You will repeat the Words of your Master, Watch and pray: you will prepare souls for temptation, and you will help them when temptation befalls them. You will know that your weakness, your temporary infidelity has been pardoned. The enemy who tempted you has not gained, indeed he will have lost, and you have gained in humilty; and all

your life long, you will glorify God, by your trust in His infinite Mercy ».

The man looked anxiously inte Our Lady's eyes. « But I must have pained Him so », he said, « Lady, how can I undo that pain? He was so sweet, so tender, so kind to all; He must have felt our desertion keenly when we left Him, I heard Him say to Peter, Will you also leave Me? and the Voice sounded so pitiful ».

« Did you hear the answer Peter made Him? » asked Our Lady.

« Yes, and often it has rung in my ears, « Lord, to Whom shall we go, THOU hast the Words of Eternal Life. It sounded so reproachfully in my ears that I sought distraction, I strove hard not to think of how He looked ».

« If you had prayed », said Our Lady, « at that moment, you would have returned to your Lord and Master: but be comforted, He is God, and therefore as well as the sorrow He felt at your desertion He also had the consolation of knowing you would return to Him; if you could only know the joy of Jesus, Heart, at the return of one who has left Him! Is it not said that the Angels rejoice more over one sinner who does penance, than over ninety nine just, who do not need penance? The Angels' joy is in the joy of Jesus, they are rejoicing now. Let your soul make melody in union with them ».

« Ah! if I could but see Him again, and tell Him of my sorrow, and that if He will take me back again into His service, I will never desert Him, I will never, never leave Him again ».

« Go, now », said Our Lady, « to Peter, and tell him your tale, and you will learn from him how to show your sorrow to your Lord; Peter will open to you again

the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven; he has the keys; he is deputed to act for Jesus, he has the power to absolve, and to admit into the Church, and though your sins were as scarlet they shall be made as white as wool. You will learn much that you do not yet know of the Life and Death of your Master, and then having been once more reconciled with Him, you will prepare for the work of that ministry, to which He once called you. Now go in peace, and John will accompany you to Peter ».

Our Lady preferred, as this was an unusual case, to send the penitent to St. Peter, rather than let John speak to him, but St. John, with his sweet sympathy and compassion, accompanied him to the dwelling of the Prince of the Apostles, and having recommended him to the care of that generous heart, returned to Our Lady, to tell her, that all was well, and that She might rejoice at having brought another lost sheep, back to to the Arms of the Good Shepkerd.

XX.

Our Lady and the Little Children.

There were special seasons of rejoicing in Our Lady's Life, feasts of joy to Her, such as when a whole family was converted, and St. Peter, or whoever the Apostle was, who had baptized them, knowing the pleasure it would give Our Lady, would say to them, « Now, go to the Mother of Jesus ».

Then children's voices and the patter of little feet, would be heard on the rough stones of the street, and St. John

might enter, and ask, knowing full well what the answer would be, « Mother, the family of Nathan and all his household are here, will you see them? »

« Willingly, John, « would Our Lady reply, and then a Christian mother and her tribe of little ones, would enter, the mother somewhat in awe of the Mother of the Messias, and trying to compose their behaviour, making the children bow down as St. John blessed them; and then, as they surrounded Our Lady, the woman would begin to tell of her great happiness; of how she had first, been baptised, quite secretly, then she had got St. Peter to come to their house, who had so delighted her husband that he had gone out to hear him preach, and then, finally, all had become Christians. This and much more was eagerly told, for our Lady was a wonderful listener, She never seemed weary, for indeed She was not weary of listening to any tale that was brought to Her. She enquired after the absent ones, and asked why it was the father had not come, and then listened sweetly to the long-winded explanation which the wife, (for women were probably, in those days, very much the same as those of the present day) would give of the business that had taken him into the country; she would dwell upon each minute detail, when she saw what an unusually interested listener she had found. The little ones would be told not to talk, while she herself talked most volubly, of hopes and fears, of thanksgiving and anxieties, all mixed up, and all poured into the attentive ear of Our Lady. The woman instinctively felt that she had one to deal with who did not become tired as others do, she had found a Mother, and mothers are always interested in their children's affairs, in a way no other can be. The Christ-

ian mother, no doubt, felt that the one who listened to her so sweetly and attentively, was the appointed Mother of Christ's Human Family, and her joy at becoming a Christian, was enhanced by meeting the Mother of Christ. Ah! is it not so, with all of us, except those who unhappily have not received the wonderful gift of faith! How we mourn for them, who miss so much comfort and joy in life, by not knowing and honouring the Mother of their Lord and King.

Let us look at Her again, as the little ones, tired with their mother's long tale, and encouraged by our Lady's gentle smile burst all bounds, and play with Her distaff and spindle, and pick up the various little things in the room; one little mite has gathered a flower and brought it to Her, with delight. St. John looks on, smiling, it was always a fresh joy to him to watch Her, for he always saw Her as the Mother, of God, and honoured Her as such in every act and every word. She, who conversed with Angels, conversed so sweetly and easily with all around, ever saying just the thing that they nee ded. When She took the tiny baby in Her arms St. John's heart overflowed, for he seemed to see Her with the Holy Child, and perhaps it was on one of these ocassions that St. Luke caught a glimpse of Her, and embodied it in his picture of Her holding the Divine Infant, as he looked on Her, holding the newly baptised infant whom the Mother had brought to Her, in her arms.

At the risk of repetition, we cannot help saying how different would be the attitude of many good Protestants, had they lived in this favoured period which we are now trying to contemplate, to what it is at present, with regard to Our Lady. It is hardly conceivable that theywould

have looked upon Her then, as they do now, as almost an obstacle to the right honouring of Her Divine Son, and would not rather, have come to her, and brought their children to Her, as we are picturing this Christian Mother doing, to learn, from Her sweet lips, how to love Her Divine Son better.

We can readily believe it was no unusual thing for the parents to bring their families to see Our Blessed Lady, and She always received them with such love and gracious manners, that no one ever felt that they were in the way, not even the little, ones, whose perpetual prattle and questions, might easily tire even those who love them best; but with Our Lady it was not so. She would let them crowd around Her, breaking off even a serious conversation to answer their many questions, or show them some little thing which would interest and amuse them, or else She would send them into the little garden, and when they had gone She would turn to the father and mother, saying, « Oh, what a mission you have been entrusted with! What gifts God has given you in giving you those little ones. After the possession of Himself, God could hardly give you a greater gift than His Images. You love and prize your children, it is true, but would you not value them more, if you realised, more clearly, how God Himself prizes them? Your home should therefore be a sanctuary, where God places His treasures, and entrusts them to your care. The soul is a beautiful world, created, by God, and He rejoices in it, as He rejoiced in the unfallen earth, ere sin crept in, and a blight came over the beautiful creation of God, the roses brought forth thorns, and sickness and death came into the world. Guard then carefully the precious treasure, the little world in the

soul of each of your children, keep it from the dangers that surround them, that they may not fail their God who prizes them so much, and has entrusted them to you to keep for Him. You have indeed a great account to give of your stewardship, when you have been entrusted with children to bring up for Heaven, What a joy it will be for the parents, who have taken good care of their precious charge, to meet them again at the Judgment seat of God, and how grateful will the children be that their parents brought them up for Heaven, and not for earth only. Had it not been for their good parent's care, thy might never have had the happiness of seeing God, and rejoicing in the unspeakably beatiful vision of God, for all eternity. Instehad of being the joy they are to God, alas! they might bave become an object of hatred, instead. Our Lady paused, it was never easy for Her to speak of the punishments of God's Justice, and St. John, ever ready to spare Her any thing that might give Her pain, changed the conversation, by drawing, the parent's attention, to their children, sporting outside, in the joyous innocence of childhood; and then he would say seriously, and coming from one so gentle the words would have a great effect, « What would you not feel to see these beautiful images of God, driven from God's presence, sent from the Throne of His justice, to become the prey of His enemy? Would it not be terrible, if such a thing happened, because of your neglect of your duties to your children, either through carelessness or worldliness? can you bear to think what it would be to hear your children upbraid you as being the cause of their eternal perdition? »

They were stern words, but St. John knew that Our Lady wished them to be said, for Her prophetic instinct had divined that the parents were inclined to put the interests of earth before the things of God, and desired to warn them of the danger of so doing.

As St. John spoke the father said, softly, « May the God of Abraham and Isaac protect us! » « May Jesus of Nazareth strengthen us to do our duty ».

« What doth it profit a man », said St. John, « To gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? These are our Master's words ».

Then as Our Lady came forward to bid Her guests farewell, She said gently, as if in answer to the hesitation in the parent's mind between temporal and eternal goods, « God will provide for your children even though you cannot be, apparently, so prosperous as Christians, as you would otherwise have been, or do as much for your children from a worldly point of view. Fear not, on that account, for your children will not suffer: Has not Truth. Incarnate said « Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His Justice and all these things shall be added unto you? »

And the parents as they left Her presence would say, one to another, « How did the Mother of Jesus know our thoughts and difficulties? Surely, HE must have revealed it to Her. Praise be to His Holy name, for what might we not have done, but for the warniug we have received! »

It would be well for many parents, in the present day, if they could hear Our Lady's voice, warning them not to risk their children's eternal welfare, by prizing too highly the things of earth; if they could hear Her sweet voice, repeating the Words of Jesus, « Seek ye first the

Kingdom of God ». Alas there are many, in these days, who would need a sterner rebuke than Our Dear Mother's gentle words. Faithless parents, indeed, many are, who do not realise that their children, are a trust from God, they are His, and He will hold them responsible, if through their fault, their children's souls are injured. What indeed will it profit the parents, if having placed their children in high positions in this world they lose, there, the Throne God had destined for them in Heaven? In past years, many a defect in the training of children was supplied by their education at school, but now, alas, in this sad age of infidelity, Christian teaching has been abolished in so many countries, that we find every land overrun with pagans, so to say, and pagans, too, without many of the pagan virtues. It is indeed a sight to mourn over, and to make us implore God's mercy on this sinful world, begging Him, also, to bestow light upon those whom He has entrusted with the care of children, that they may seek His Glory and their children's eternal welfare before the transitory goods and honours of earth.

We might draw many a mental picture of our Lady, with the little children around Her, for like Her Divine Son, She would love them to come to Her. On one occasion, St. John opened the door gently, and asked, « Mother, You love the little ones of Jesus, and there is one outside who has brought them to you, but he would like to speak to you first, may I bring him, in? »

Our Lady gave her consent with Her usual sweetness, and St. John motioned to a man to come forward, and Our Lady looked up with a bright smile of recognition, « You are Ruben, are you not? » « I am, Lady, « he answered », I am one of those who tried to send the chil-

dren from Jesus, when the mothers brought them for His blessing, and I have always heard His words sounding in my ears as He rebuked me; and the happy thought came to me to collect some children, and bring them to you to bless them and thus make reparation for my roughness on that day. They are without « Lady, and are longing to see you ; they have already heard of you as the Mother of the Messias ».

Children's voices sounded sweetly, and Our Lady turned to St. John, « Let them come in », She said.

St. John went to fetch them, leaving the man looking at Our Lady « How much you resemble our Master, Lady », he said, « As with a face full of joy and love, expectant as you are at this moment, He said », Suffer the little children to come uto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. « God will bless you for your good thought », said Our Lady, and as She spoke the little ones entered the room, singing gaily. Oh, that we could picture Our Lady, at that moment, as St. John led them in, and the old disciple of Our Lord presented them one by one to Our Lady, telling her, with pleasure, who they were, whether their parents were baptised or catechumens; and mentioning any other little trait of family history, to all of which Our Lady listened with interest, while the childrens eyes were fixed upon Her with that wondering look of awe and reverence, one so often sees in the eyes of innocent little ones, and then they began to ask questions. Our Lady led their prattle to something in the Life of the Holy Child, and they sat on the floor around Her, as She told them of some simple incidents in the Life of Jesus, and gradually led up to what the old disciple had just been speaking of. She

described the beautiful scene, the bright day, how the mothers had brought the children to Jesus, and how, because He was tired, the disciples had wished to send them away.

« That was not kind, was it, Lady? » said one little child, and the old disciple smiled and turning to them, said, « And I was one of those who wished to send the children away, and asked their mothers not to trouble the Master, and then it was that He spoke. Will you tell them, Lady, His words? »

« Suffer little children to come unto Me », said Our Lady, « Jesus stretched out His arms and they ran to Him, as they saw that wonderful look on His Face, inviting them to come to Him.

« Suffer the Little Children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven ».

« They must have been very good children » said one bright little fellow.

Our Lady smiled, « You wish that you had also been there, and seen Jesus Christ, do you not? Yes, they were indeed favoured children, whom Jesus held in His arms He gave them each a mission which God grant they may fulfill ».

« What is a mission, Lady, « asked one, and Our Lady, beckoned him from the others, and anwered, « A mission is a message from the great God in Heaven, to a little soul on earth to do something for Him. If the King of Kings wanted you to enter His service, would you not be proud to do so? »

The little boy's arms went round Our Lady's neck as he whispered « Will you ask the King of Kings to employ me and tell Him I will be faithful and true to Him ».

« I will, little one, I will, your mission will be told

you in good time, and when you are enlisted in your King's service and become a soldier of Christ, great things will you do for Him, and dearly will He love you », said Our Lady, as She put the child down, but he would not be extricated from Her embrace and whispered « but I want to promise, I want to promise Jesus ».

Mary, Spouse of the Holy Ghost heard the whispers of the Holy Spirit, through the child's lips. It was the budding vocation and the desire to bind oneself to God by vow; fervently Mary blessed the child and prayed silently for his perseverance in the path God had called him to, and then turned to the other little ones, to show them some precious relic of the Infant Jesus, and give them some little gift that they would prize because the Mother of Christ had given it to them. Then St. John blessed them, and the old disciple, both pleased and proud at the success of his plan, withdrew with the children, carrying with them the benediction of the Mother above all mothers.

From the consideration of such mental pictures as these how easily our mind goes to that custon, so beautiful and so pleasing to God, of consecrating children and young girls to the Immaculate Virgin–Mother of God, and we cannot but think that it has been handed down to us from the early Apostolic Times for it is only in the Church, the mystical Bride of the Lamb of God, that we find this sweet and touching devotion to His Mother; those lands that have thrown off her blessed yoke, have likewise put away all honour and devotion to the Mother of God. Poor people! it is indeed sad, and they are often those who speak most of being in union with the early ages of the Christianity. May God show them their

errors, and through the intercession of his sweet Mother, bring them back to His Fold, that having humbled themselves and become like little children, they may share with all the faithful, the privilege of having Mary for their Mother.

XXI.

Our Lady and the flowers.

There can be no doubt that Our Lady was found of flowers, and therefore it is most probable that St. John tried to get them for Her, whenever it was possible. How easy it is to glance in spirit at this room again, and see Our Lady, after the example of Her Divine, Son, making use of the ordinary things of nature, to lead the mind to Eternal Truths.

When some poor suffering person, or one over eager about worldly goods came to Her, She would repeat those Words of Jesus, so loved by all, « Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they labour not, neither do they spin; but I say to you not Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass, which is to-day, and tomorrow is cast into the oven God doth so clothe, how much more you, O ye of little faith? » (Matt? 28-30). Our Lady might tak a flower, and point out its beauty, showing how wonderfuly God had made it, the hidden parts, the petals all so perfect. Thus, by the constant presence of her Spouse the Holy Ghost, she brought home with more force the Words of Jesus, « And Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these.

Thus the worldly minded would insensibly grow unworldly as Her words sunk into their hearts.

People of the world! If you had Our Lady to go to now, Her visible presence would rebuke the vanity we see all around, more often in the old than in the young. Think of Our Lady, People of earth; think of the Virgin-Mother and the Child Divine! Men of the world, think of the fair Virgin Mother, and thank God for the beautiful One, who is given to men as their Mother. Young girls, think of the Mother of God, and strive to imitate Her modesty.

Ah! draw near to Her and learn what your place in earth, your mission in this world is; but how? By imitating Mary, in word and work; by simple unaffected ways. You may be anxious to please in order to gain man's love, but win his respect also, by modest manners, by genuineness, by truthfulness.

Mother, You bring so many thoughts in Your train, as we contemplate You. We were watching You with the flowers, speaking to the women of Jerusalem, and that has led us to think of the present age, and to wish that those that live in it could see You; and though they cannot do so with their bodily eyes, Mother, reveal Thyself to them in spirit, and may the Justice of God be appeased, as He views the beauties of His chosen work again, appearing on this earth.

Be Mary-like, for the Eternal Father will bless you and yours, if He sees His Immaculate Daughter Mary reflected on the earth. Be Mary-like, for the Eternal Word will incline towards you, with exceeding love, as you honour Mary, for Jesus nestles in the hearts of those who honour His Mother. Be Mary-like, for the Holy Ghost

opens His treasures of grace and bestows His gifts munificently upon those who love and imitate His Spouse; then will the virtues, of which flowers are but emblems, adorn your soul.

Mother, I come to Thee, with my poor little May flowers, but as I offer them I have a meaning. They are to represent, by their sweet scent, the humble prayer my heart constantey offers to my God. They are to signify act of patience, union with the Will of God, when He permits even what seems unjust. That is a flower to be culled with difficulty, for it is a rose surrounded with thorns and as I try to reach it will prick me, but if I bleed I will be brave, for is not the smile of my Mother, as she accepts my offering, worth the trouble I take, and the pricks are but little things. « Ecce and Fiat » all day long; and at the end of the day what shall I not have to offer Mary? Indeed even flowers are but poor emblems, for they fade. There will be jewels in the crown that Jesus has reserved for those who fight the good fight, who keep the Faith. There will be gems, worked into the Nuptial Robe which the Mother has in keeping for Her children; and which is the splendid work Jesus gives His Mother to do for His elect. It comes into Her Maternal office, for all that is beautiful on earth are but faint reflections of the beauties of Heaven; and a mother's care and joy of heart, when adorning her child, are beautiful to watch, even on earth. The Queen of Heaven is man's Mother and the Nuptial Robes are in her keeping. Let us hasten to give Her the jewels She asks from us. Let the acts of Hope ascend; how brilliantly will they shine on that white robe that the Mother has in

store for those who persevere to the end, as the lovers of Mary will do if they will keep faithful to her.

Please God, this Month of Mary, may be to many the rubicon or turning point in their lives, where they learn to anchor theirs hearts so securely to Our Lady's, that Eternity will find them happy children of their Heavenly Mother, placed by Her in the Arms of God, for ever.

XXII.

Our Lady's love for the Hardworking Poor.

Our Lady, as a girl, was wont to study the Scriptures, and had pondered much over those plain emphatic words of the Holy Ghost. « In the sweat of thy brow, thou shalt eat thy bread ».

It meant more to Her, than we can imagine, and for that reason, She especially loved those whom God had called to that particular state of life, in which they literally fulfilled His word.

Mary regarded those hard-working members of society, the poor labourers, in the same way as we might look upon some beautiful Religious Order in the Church, devoted to a life of penance, suffering it for the sins of others, as well as their own. She looked on them with love, as they fulfilled the Divine decree cheerfully performing the penance enjoined; and bringing blessings upon the earth, not only for themselves, but for others also.

Favoured ones! think often of the love of the Mother of Jesus for you; the God-Man, Himself was one of you, He chose this life, as the one most suitable for the great work, He had come to do.

Never regret the position God has placed you in, but thank Him for the sign of predestination, which He has given you. As in these days, we look with reverence and love upon those who embrace the Religious State, honouring those who are favoured with the grace of vocation, so did our Lady look upon the poor, and revered as well as loved them.

We may picture Her, with a poor widow, striving to console her, as she speaks of her poverty and struggles « Your Maker is your guardian and Protector, cast all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you ».

If we could have heard the spouse of the Holy Ghost using the words of Holy Writ, the words of the Holy Spirit, how differently would they sound.

Our Lady's soul, was like a sweet instrument, responding to the sorrows of others; she listened, then came the words' she ever loved to use — the words of Jesus — the words of Scripture. If when we spoke them, we only remembered to say them with our Lady!

We seem to hear her, as she repeats what her Son spoke on the mountain, bidding His people not to be over anxious as to earthly wants. « Your heavenly Father knoweth you have need of these things, Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow » (St. Math. V, 32, 28) and the widow realized she was not alone, though she had lost her husband; for Our Lady taught her to lean upon God and to trust Him; that He allowed her to feel this poverty, and her children to suffer a little want: that she might know that there was *One* who felt for her and to whom, she could never appeal in vain. « Lean upon the Rock of ages ». Our Lady would say « The Eternal will uphold you, cast your care upon Him, for He hath Care

of you » — and that grand grace, that sense of Divine Support, that union of the soul with the Almighty would, as our Lady spoke come to the needy one, — She would know that link of trust and confidence which glorifies the the Creator, and which brings such unutterable joy to the creature. Thus would Our Lady work in that formation of souls, which we scarely realize or use in the present day. We know not Her power, would that we did, for we should then ourselves grow powerful in word and work. We should come to possess this power in order to relieve distress, to help souls, and by the good use of it to perfect our own. This is the point so overlooked, the aiming at perfection « Be ye perfect ». Ah! If we would remind one another, or would listen when reminded, that our trials are permitted to us for the work of our perfection.

We are looking at Our Lady with the poor widow, We see as Our Lady speaks, the distress and anxiety on her face changing to a peaceful resignation. We see the exterior, but what a wonderful change in the soul! It had fallen into the arms of its God. The act of trust in divine Providence, is such a marvellous act, works a wonderful transformation. How we should rejoice if we could help any soul towards it. Without the trial how could there be this Grand act of trust in Providence. This act is one that draws the soul irresistably closer to God as certainly as doubt and distrust keeps the soul away from God.

How would the virtue of Hope bloom, if occasions did not arise to draw it out. This would our Lady explain to sorrowful souls, ever using the words of Jesus, and stopping that doubting « Why? » which is such a hindrance to the soul's life, and a barrier between herself and God.

The widow went away consoled, her heart echoing the words she had heard, her lips saying over and over again « Though He should slay me, yet will I trust in Him ». She knew that He would supply her own, and her children's needs.

To the next who came to her, our Lady would speak of the beauty of Charity, how it was the best way to show the love of God, she would tell of the poor widow and her needs. She would speak of the reward for the cup of cold water repeating the words of Jesus « Whatever you have done to the least of my brethren; you have done it unto me ». Wants would be relieved and the spirit of charity spread. Thus amongst the early Christians were all things in common: not as the socialists advocate, by destroying rank and position, but by relieving and helping one another according to their several position.

Religion is not a *leveller*. It strives to help each other to attain the perfection of their state, We find the bodies of the martyrs dressed according to their rank, and the dresses were very distinct in those times. The various states are necessary for the practice of many christian virtues, and in catholic countries, we come across of so many beautiful reflections of God, which would not exist in a society, such as the *socialists* advocate. We see kings and queens, and the nobles of the land, reflecting the condescension of God, as they kneel and wash the feel of the poor, and serv them at table.

God has in many ways showed His pleasure in these acts. We see in Rome now, the table at which St. Gregory daily served 12 poor men, and at which we are told, one day an angel sat, and received the alms, which the saintly

Pontiff, daily distributed to twelve poor men, in honour of our Lord's twelve Apostles.

To return to the poor widow. — After having been consoled with such thoughts as we tried to describe — the poor mother would go away comforted with the thought that her children would have treasures in heaven, because of their well borne poverty here, and that they were more certain of eternal salvation, because of their suffering and privations in earth. Our Mother would then appeal to her own St. Joseph to send help in need, which would surely come, and the poor widow would be aided.

Surely our Lady would make use of St. Joseph as we do, for of all who have ever lived on this earth there is no one who fulfilled as Our Lady did those words « Let your conversation be in Heaven ».

Mary glorified her God, by Her communion with the saints, that joyous doctrine of Christ's Church. « I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Communion of Saints, the resurrection of the body » etc.

Did the Apostles compose their creed in our Lady's presence? It is not improbable, and we can imagine how beautifully, our Lady would describe is the poor man of labour, the reward of his hard life, explaining to him, what a glorified body is, and describing divine truth in the simplest way. These bodies that perform humble penance on earth, will be the most glorious in Heaven. Labour is God's appointed penance, and those who have patiently and cheerfully performed the penance, will be a glory to the Sacred Humanity in Heaven. The hand that takes the spade and digs is more glorious than the gloved hand, uneess there is a purer intention in the action that is performed by the latter.

Thus our Lady might speak taking the rough hand saying « This hand will be clasped by the Hand that bears the mark with which It was wounded for love of you. He for whom you have laboured with great love, will reward your labours. He will give eternal life for the transitory hardships of time and in Eternity you will be friend of Him, who gave His life for you, you will be the brother of Jesus your Heavenly Brother. For you and those you love who have been faithfule, there will be no more weeping; for God will wipe away all tears from your eyes, and your labours on earth will have brought you and yours to Heaven.

Life is sweet when lived for God, and the life with God for ever in Heaven, will be your reward ».

Mary ceased speaking, it was her custom to wait awhile after she had spoken, to give the words time to sink into the soul. How different in this, is She from us; we rattle on, giving the words, however good, no time to sink, like good seed into the souls of others, and so there is little fruit.

We do not appeal to the Holy Spirit, that the words may be efficacious and bear fruit. We give ourselves no time to breathe a prayer to our guardian angel, as well as that of the person, to whom we are speaking, and our efforts are often fruitless because prayerless.

Our Lady's words were all peumed with prayer She leant upon God in all she said, and did. She, the perfect one, did this, and we, weak and imperfect as we are, speak without praying and act of ourselves without reference to God.

How very foolish we are. May God give us sense and knowledge and may we, whilst we meditate on our

Lady's sweet life on earth, make some resolutions to gain some wisdom, to strive to tread in her steps.

We are considering Her now with the poor and there are many ways of contemplating her amongst them. There are many sweet episodes that could very easily have happened, and lessons to be learned so useful and necessary, that we linger over this contemplation.

She has taken the poor man's hand, he is wondering as she speaks, if it is really he who will have our dear Lord's Hands in his and our Lady goes on « Still more this body so often worn with work, will be gloriousey beautiful in Heaven resting on the bosom of God. You know it was said of old « I know that my Redeemes liveth, and in my flesh, I shall see my God, my own eyes shall see him and no other ».

You will look into the Face of Jesus, with those eyes with which you look on me. Your own eyes and no other, will meet the approving smile of Jesus, rewarding you for your life of labour ».

Ah! Mother in these days speak to our poor hand working classes, make them respect their bodies as living Temples of God. We scarcely think the poorer classes in the time of our Lady were as ignorant as now. How much do the crowds of poor who throng our great metropolis realize they have a soul to save. Are not some of them worse than the pagans? How can they be got at?

Mother send your angels to bring light to those who are in such darkness. We will do what you bid us, proud to be your little helpers. Only let us know the way, by which we can teach those poor ignorant ones, how to sanctify their labours. Accompany us, dear mother, as we go to visit them, and we will try to show them the va-

lue that God sets upon them, by our own reverence and gentleness towards them.

How can anyone be unkind to the poor? and yet they are often treated unkindly, either through thoughtlessness, or want of true faith.

Let us always remember, that what we do to the very least of them, we do it to Jesus Himself.

The Eye of the Eternal Father, rests on the son of the the poor labouring man, with the same, or even a greater love than on the king upon his throne. The intention is what God looks upon.

Ah! then working men! Work with a pure intention. Let it be « Fiat », at every turn, then will God's smile and blessing brighten your life on earth, then will you receive the reward of your labours. Is not this a great recompense?

Your life, for evermore will be brightened by the smile of God. What matter then the fine houses or clothes or food of others if you have kept your family honestly, if you have borne patiently the pain of seeing the privations of those you love?

Thus Our Lady would speak to the father of some poor family. « Be comforted, you are laying up treasures in Heaven; you who wear poor clothing on earth will be more gloriously apparelled in Heaven. There you will see, those whom you love the objects of the intense Complacency of God, who created them, and placed them in a special state of graces.

More gloriously by will the Blood of Christ shine in your souls, and those of your loved ones, from the closer resemblance to your Saviour in His Mortal life on earth.

Look up to Heaven; see God's beauty; what are our

earthly habitations worth? What does the finest clothing, the most delicate food matter now, when you think of those noble ones of God who have fought the good fight and live in the perfect harmony of the love of Heaven? Of what value, will the honours of earth, then, be to you? For ever and for ever you will be a delight to your Heavenly Father for your soul will more closely resemble, Jesus, the Son of His Love, who was poor and in labours from His youth. His Sacred Body was often wearied, like yours, He shared your sorrows and cares. Soon, so soon, they will all be over, and we will be with those we love, see their happiness and rejoice in it, glad that we were, poor on earth, since it obtained for us the riches of Heaven ».

The poor, to whom she spoke, looking around Her room, so plain, so simple would not even whish for the luxuries of the rich but would feel honoured to imitate Mary the Mother of the Messias, in her poverty.

Can we imagine what Mary would have in her little room? Perhaps, a copy of the Tables of the Law, or pictures of the ancient history of her race. Yes, she may have had these, but anything unnecessary she would avoid.

As we write, we feel a loathing for our carpeted floor, our luxury and nick-nacks. We begin to feel more humble, and reverence the poor, as God's chosen one, His favourites, value their prayers, and to feel a growing contempt for the riches of the world.

Mary, with the poor labourers has taught us to value the riches of poverty, and reminds that we too, must at least, be « poor in spirit » if we would posses the Kingdom of God.

XXIII.

Our Lady with a young Girl.

In the spiritual visit we are now making to the House of St. John, we see Our Lady, with a young girl, who, though inclined to embrace the faith, is still in the thralls of paganism.

She often came to the humble dwelling where the Queen of Angels lived in such obscurity, drawn at first by the sweetness and gentleness that breathed in every word which fell from the lips of the Mother of the Messias, then she listened to the teaching of that new and wonderful Religion, till despite her own proud heart she desired to believe. When she left Our Lady's presence the gentler moord was followed by a harder one of doubt and incredulity, and then, worn out with fighting against herself, she returned to Our Lady to confide to Her the story of her struggle. « You say you do not believe, poor child, have you prayed since you were here last? »

« Lady, I have prayed to believe as you believe », was the girl's answer, « I have spoken more kindly to those around me because I remembered your kindness to me. It seemed more than kindness, it seemed love ».

« It is love », said Our Lady, « and for love of God I love you who are His Image, in creating you He imprinted His Image on your soul, which image was lost in part at the fall of man ».

« Why did man fall? » asked the girl. « I want to believe, but one mystery leads to another, and it is difficult; it seems like entering a labyrinth ».

« When you came to me last », said Our Lady, « I

asked you to pray that God might give you the gift of Faith, and that when the Light came you might follow it. Now, you ask the meaning of the fall. It was the will of man crossing the Will of God ».

« But why did God give free-will, when He knew how it would be used? »

Our Lady answered, « When you first came to me my poor child, you told me you had neither father nor mother to love you; you were alone in the world, and yet you have slaves and domestics who wait upon you ».

« But that is not love », said the girl, « they are obliged to wait on me; they do not do so from love ».

« Thus you see », rejoined Our Lady, « God does not want this forced service from His creatures, as from the inanimate creation. The sun must shine, the plants must grow, but to men He gave the power to serve Him or not; for He will not compel their service; He deserves the love of man, therefore He gave him his free-will. Do you understand now, my child, from your own heart how the Heart of God desires to be loved by His creatures? My child, give 'Me your Heart', He says, to you ».

Mary, the spiritual Mother of all mankind rejoiced as she saw the work her words wrought in the soul of the young girl at her side. To how many, Mary, have you been a spiritual Mother? how many have you not drawn within the sweet influence of God's Holy Spirit? Their number cannot be counted on earth, but in Heaven, we shall, please God, if we are faithful, see Thee the joyful Mother of many children.

Thus the creation and the fall of man were unfolded to the mind of the girl, and she began to understand that she was created by a God of love for Himself, that she

was desired by Him, and was an object of love to the great Creator.

« God desires my love », she repeated again and again, « I want to love Him, He asks for it, ' My child give me thy heart ', Lady, the world seems different to me; now I breathe a different air, but when I leave you; my sadness will return, I shall doubt, I shall be troubled, but I promise you, in return for your goodness to me, I will be very good to those about me ».

She left Our Lady's presence, carrying with her some of the brightness that sweet Mother always shed on those who were favoured enough to come in contact with her; but when some days after she again sought Our Lady's presence, the face was clouded, and the old air of doubt had returned.

« It is difficult to believe, though you are so good, how we, on earth, can know those things, which we see not. I would that it were true; there are so many things that seem incredible, that I am distracted, and it seems worse than before, to have had such glad hopes given, and then to have them damped; the old dull look has returned to the earth, which for a time had seemed so bright. How can we know? »

Our Lady, taking her hands, (her very touch was a grace to those thus caressed), said, « You expect a feast tomorrow in your house? »

« I do », said the girl, « Not that it will mean any pleasure to me ».

« And have you given any directions? »

« Naturally », said the girl, in a surprised tone, « and I hope they will be obeyed ».

« Then », said Our Lady, « Do you believe that the

Omnipotent Being, who has placed His creatures on this earth, to prepare for the Eternal Feast, in Heaven, has left them no directions, what to do? Not so; He has given His commandments plainly; for He is a God of order, as you see throughout creation, and He gives His orders clearly and decisively ».

« But I do not see this », said the girl, « I see disorder and confusion, everywhere ».

That is so » said Our Lady, « because God's orders are not obeyed, God's creatures break them, and thus disorder enters into creation, which God arranged in perfect order. You have given orders for the Feast you keep tomorrow, but if your domestics do not obey them, will there not be disorder and confusion. The Ten Commandments are gathered in one book, the Sacred Scriptures, and God has given a teacher, on Earth, an infallible Teacher, to interpret His Word, His Church; all is ordered and arranged by the Almighty: the Church is the voice of God to His people, for He willed not that they should be as you are, my poor child, turned by the winds of doubt and dissension. He would have all united; one Faith; Lord; one Baptism. For this almighty God sent His Son Jesus Christ, the Messias; that the crooked places might be made straight, the rough ways plain ».

« Jesus was your Son, Lady » said the girl, her heart warming again at the sound of Our Lady's sweet voice, « would that I had known Him, He must have been like You, and how I would have loved Him ».

« But, you must love Him now »; said Our Lady, « call upon Him and remind Him that He is Jesus, Saviour and Lover of Souls ».

« Jesus », said Mary, « is the God-Man, He rose from

the dead, He dieth now no more, He is both God and Man, therefore with him there is no past or future. You were with Him, one of the Redeemed. He bore you in His arms, as a mother does her child; He saw the moment when you would hear of His love, and return it, and it solaced His suffering Heart. He would have you for a member of His mystical body the Church, you will cooperate with this desire and become a Christian ».

« I will be a Christian », said the girl, earnestly « I will be a member of that mystical body, of which you tell me Christ is the Head. Then you will be my Mother indeed, is it not so, Lady? ».

« You have made your resolve », said Our Lady, tenderly, « You will be a Christian, the beauties of the Church you enter will gradually unfold themselves to you. Your will is now at work, for good, that free will which you must value as God's great gift; that will is a wonderful thing, a marvellous instrument, pray to use it well, value it, for God gave it to make His children like Himself '. « I have said, you are Gods »; God's Office is to create out of nothing, the Human will can form beautiful works out of what God has given His people to use for this purpose, in imitation of Himself; all the time resting upon God knowing that by itself human nature, in its present fallen state, would only disfigure the earth and misuse His gifts. The will has still great power, that often indeed lies dormant, scarcely realized by the possessor; therefore you must daily renew this firm act of your will that you have made, nay not only daily, but hourly if possible, in order that your offering may be firm and irrevocable ».

« How clearly I understand what you say, for while I am with you my will seems firmly bent on doing what

you tell me to; but when I leave you, weakness seems to seize me and I fear that I may give way. Friends come to persuade me to go to the pagan rites, and I hesitate, for in me there seem to be two wills, and I know not which will conquer. I do not feel master of myself ».

Our Lady answered, « Satan enslaved the human will; but Christ came to set all free, if they would accept their freedom, but all do not accept it, they prefere to serve the world, themselves, even Satan, rather than God. In the Church graces are given to strengthen the will, so that what man cannot do of himself, he can do by God's help. Still it remains for everyone to use their own powers of will; to WILL to do what is right, thus keeping in harmony with the Divine Will; for this was man created. You wish, poor little weak one, to be true to the God Who created you with such love, but you fear, and rightly, your own weakness; in the Church, Sacraments are given to strengthen souls in every stage of life ».

« What is a Sacrament? » asked the girl.

« It is a meeting with God, it is a pardon, an embrace from God, God comes to forgive, to welcome, He comes to nourish and feed the soul, He comes to encourage the soul to battle, and He also comes to heal the wounds received in fighting that good fight. You cannot understand the wondrous aids to holiness, which the Church gives her children, and which you can receive when you are once baptized. You are already my child, you will soon become one of My Son's own members in His Mystical Body ». Our Lady drew the young girl into Her sweet embrace, and Her Maternal Heart overflowed with joy, as she thanked God for the work, wrought through her means, in this precious soul. Those were mo-

ments in Our Mother's life that repaid Her for Her bitter grief on Calvary; and it was a special joy to call her Own Priest, St. John, and give him charge of the young Catechumen, to give the necessary instructions and arrange for the Baptism to take place, according to the Church's discipline in those days.

Time has flown and now we see Our Lady, with the new made Christian sitting at her feet; Christina, as we will call her, now bears a very different look to the one of doubt and discontent she was wont to wear.

No change in Creation is so great as that wrought in the soul, by the waters of Holy Baptism, bound as it was by the chains of sin, it is now purified, and united to God. We may some times have seen on a dark and lowering day, a wild and desolate moor, and we almost shuddered and our hearts sank as we looked, for it made us think of the frown of God; and yet when the bright sun lit up the same scene, and we saw the bright light upon the far spreading landscape of hill and dale, our hearts rejoiced, for it seemed to us like the smile of God, reflected on the fair face of Nature. This is a very poor comparison, for it cannot give us a true idea of the marvellous change, which takes places when a soul is in a state of grace. Yet this wonderful work, we could often aid in bringing about, were we a little less supine, but we too often are selfish and indifferent. May God enlighten us and strengthen us to do our part to bring other souls to know the truth. Reader, resolve at this moment that the precious moments of your life will no longer be wasted, but that you will use all your energies to save souls for God.

If we would realise what a change in a soul after its conversion, let us listen to the new convert Cristina, as she nestles at Our Lady's side.

« Lady, you are now my Mother, I have a Heavenly Brother, I look forward to seeing Him in Heaven, You are His Mother, You must therefore be mine. How good God is to me! What dark days did you not help me through, what matter to me now, the trials that seemed then so hard? I am loved now, I know it; Jesus loves me, for you have told me so; You love me; You have taken me as your child, and I feel now as if I love all around. My slaves and domestics, with whom I was often so harsh, I love them now for Christ's sake, and I will strive to bring them to Him by love, as you first brought me ».

« You will », said Our Lady » Love all that Jesus loved, and He especially loved the poor and sick. His tender Heart so compassionated them, that He left the promise to His followers, that whatever they would to the least of His brethren, they would do to Him ».

« I am glad I have means », said the young Christian, « For I can go and work among the poor and sick, for love of Him, who became poor, and suffered for love of me ».

« Yes », said Our Lady, « Religion pure and undefiled before the Lord is to visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction and to keep oneself unspotted from the world ».

XXIV.

Our Lady and a young Roman convert.

The first Converts were of all ranks, conditions, and nationalities, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles, where St. Luke enumerates the various countries from whence came the visitors in Jerusalem, at the time of the Descent of the Holy Ghost. Many no doubt would visit that quiet house of St. John, and crave the boon of a few words with Her, whom all revered as the Mother of the Messias. One of these was a proud young Roman, in the employ of the Imperial Government, whose haughty overbearing manner contrasted strangely with Our Lady's sweet and gentle demeanor. Still, her kindness and the interest she always showed, led him to open his heart to her, for grace had begun its work in his soul some time before, but his proud disposition placed many obstacles in the way, which Our Lady gently strove to overcome, talking to him about different incidents in his life, and gradually gaining his confidence. He had suffered much from the dishonesty aud cowardice, of some with whom he had come in contact with.

« And you, yourself, are you always brave in fight? or do you ever desert in the hour when called to show that you are true to the cause of your master? »

« I trust I am, Lady, a deserter is an abhorrence in the sight of God and man ».

A gentle smile came to Our Lady's lips, « Are you sure that you would not desert His colours, that you would never forsake His Banner? »

Sweetly yet seriously Our Lady looked the young man in the face.

« Do you know what your Master does expect of you? »

« I scarcely know, Lady, what I am, except that I am a Christian, that is, I believe in Christ ».

« You are, then, a follower of Christ, you are, then, to walk in His footsteps. This means much, He is the perfect Leader ».

« I as poor follower, can but limp along ».

« At times », said Our Lady, « there is a halt on the march, and the Lord calls for a combat, it may be with one enemy, or with many; it is a critical moment, for many at such a moment fail. The Angels watch this combat anxiously, as they see those who have sworn fidelity, become what you have just said is despicable, to God and man, a deserter. They throw down their arms and fly ».

« You have a meaning », said the Roman, « that I grasp not; what is this combat, what are the weapons? »

« You fight for your King », said Our Lady, « and for his Kingdom, that Kingdom is or should be within you You should fight, helped by the grace of God, is your own free will, this alas, is too often weakly given over to the enemy, and the cause of Christ put on one side ». Your chief weapon.

« Is not His cause justice, Lady? » said the young man, as he began to grasp Her meaning.

« Christ has plainly said ' Forgive your enemies, and do good to those who injure you '; you are meditating revenge, my son, are you not? » and as she saw the answer, in the hard expression of his face, she continued, gently, « you must fight this feeling, or you desert His

cause, He is looking on you now, watching to see if you, will fight or lay down your arms and desert Him ».

« I will be faithful, Lady, I will not desert Him, but yet I cannot forgive ».

« Then you are not faithful, you lay down your arms and refuse to fight. If you know the trust God placed in man, when He gave him free will! This is the weapon, with which you are to fight the noblest battle earth can ever see. Use your arms manfully, resist to death. To those who thus fight, words passing sweet will be spoken, you will hear His Voice, telling you ' I am your Reward exceeding great '».

There was silence in the little room for a while, the prayer of Our Lady's Heart ascended to Heaven, as She watched the struggle going on in that proud soul. She watched that struggle, dear Mother that she always was and is, as She still, from Her glorious throne in Heaven, condescends to watch our struggles now, more anxious for us than we are for ourselves.

One would think that a soul thus prayed for, would receive so grand a grace, that it would be entirely softened and would promise all that one, so loving and tender, might ask; but it was a very human soul, full of pride and a sense of injury, quite unused to selfcontrol or to be controlled by others, and the victory was not easily won. « Lady, it is quite impossible, I cannot feel aught but anger, at this injury; I cannot forgive it or love the one who injured me, I hate him with an implacable hatred ».

Our Lady's sinless Heart rose again to a wonderful height of compassion for poor fallen nature; how strong it was, how hard to evercome! Oh! for Jesus sweetness,

oh! that the Sacred Body and Blood, that she had brought into the world, could be given to this poor youth, to reanimate him and give new life to the Faith he already possessed, thus destroying the old nature, or rather destroying what was bad and raising the natural good to a higher level; for it was indeed, a noble soul and full of generous impulses, but as yet unchecked and untrained. He had suffered a great injustice too, through treachery and deceit, and the proud Roman nature found it well nigh impossible to submit to the humiliation.

The pity and compassionate sympathy that shone in Our Lady's eyes, however, touched his heart and he added in a gentler tone, « Lady, I wish I could feel differently, but I cannot ».

Then Our Lady, smiled and said, « God asks no more for the present. Your feelings are not always under your control; you wish, that your will was strong and brave enough to make the act that the Law of Christ requires. There is a remedy for this weak will, but now think no more, or argue with yourself on this point, but only say, I will by the help of God be faithful unto death; Jesus, help me ».

« I wish to be true and faithful », he said, « If with you, Lady, if I lived near you and were often in your company, it would not be so difficult to think of the Kingdom of Heaven, and care less for the things of this world, but as it is I find it very hard. Gentle Lady, from whom I learn so much, will you not tell me more about the combat, we who would be Christ' s must fight? »

« There are many precious treasures, on earth », said Our Lady », that men guard carefully, they make many

discoveries of the powers of nature which they call inventions, which they use, and it is not surprising that they prize what they have had such trouble in discovering, yet within them they possess a greater treasure, which they hold in little account, and that is the power of their own will, it is a great gift bestowed on man by God, but it is often sadly abused. It becomes weakened, and instead of being used to give God glory, it is used to His dishonour. This is the combat all Christians have to fight, the war with their own weak wills and wicked passions. You are a brave soldier, and have been in more than one conflict, but you are undertaking a more glorious campaign now as a follower of Jesus, your chief weapon will be the right use of that free–will, when you have learned how to wield it well, then indeed failure will be impossible, provided you ever trust to the helping grace of God, and never to your own efforts. Then there are also special moments of help and strength, when God visits His Children, to encourage them in the fight, and to bestow new gifts upon them, and these visits from God are very precious ».

The young man raised his head, impetuosly, « Where and when will God visit this earth, again? I will go and lay my case before Him, and ask His help to - ».

He would have said « revenge me » but the sweet look on Our Lady's face checked him, and she said « You have to be divested of all that could distract you at the moment, when God will visit you, bringing the graces you most need, therefore you must put away from you for a time the thoughts of the world and your transactions in it. It is the least a little creature can do when preparing to receive its Creator. Those visits are called

Sacraments, and you have to prepare for them, both by prayer and study ».

« And these Sacraments, Lady, that you speak of, where are they received? what is to be done? through whom do we receive them? »

« You are but a Catechumen, and it would take too long to speak of all the Sacraments, and what you must do to receive them worthily, and what effects each has upon the soul, but have you not yet received that first Sacrament of all, the one which admits you into the Church of Christ for you say you are Christian? »

« No, not yet », replied the young man, « Nay the very name is new to me. A Christian I certainly call myself, because I heard of Peter, Apostle of Christ, and I went to hear what he had to say, from curiosity, he spoke of Christ and His service, so that I desired to enter it, and no more. I remained with the Catechumens, and as I told you, called myself a Christian, meaning by that one who believed in Christ, and detested the weakness of our Governor, Pontius Pilate, who unjustly condemned Him. I fear not to say this boldly and openly, I acknowledge that I have chosen Him, and would not deny Him, till my dying day. This mayhap, has been the reason I lost my post, as I told you. It was done through fraud and treachery, and another has unjustly obtained what was mine »; but he said the words with less bitterness than when he spoke of his enemy previously, and Our Lady answered him, « You mean what you have said, my son, you will not deny Him, but you must deny yourself. HE said deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow me ».

Our Lady's constant counsel was always to aim at

the example and instructions given in the words of her Divine Son, and simple as Her words were, they were spoken always with great earnestness and weight.

« You cannot lower the standard of your Master », she continued, « You must forgive and you must teach forgiveness; would it be better for your soul to slur over the present difficulty, and then have the remorse afterwards, of finding out you had wandered from the path traced out by Jesus, your Master? This one evil would produce others, and it would spread, and the followers of Christ would not be true Christians, they would form sects, if they were allowed to decline from the path of perfection. They would feel they were not of one spirit with Christ, and they would divide, and be ruled by party spirit, disgracing the name of Christians ».

How true are not Our Lady's words, for are not all sects commenced in the same way, the leaders have strayed from the high level of Christian perfection, and lowered the Standard of the Cross? They have formed their own judgements and thus deserved the words of the indignant Apostle, « Is Christ divided? » We sometimes wonder and cannot see where the soul first strayed, but the Angels watching saw, and sent words of warning through the wise and good, which were unheeded.

But to return to the young Romam; his speech to Our Lady revived the memory of his wrongs and he said « I cannot bear it, God is a lover of Justice, and would not expect me to put up with such tyranny and injustice ».

Poor human nature! even in the presence of the gentle Mother this was said, though the tone was not as loud as it had been; and Our Lady's compassion was seen in

Her face, as she strove to calm him. « It is hard, indeed, that the place due to you, should thus, through bribery be given to another, but you, for love of the Master you have promised to serve, must strive to be patient; and you will, I know, though it is very difficult ».

Though the slightest stain had never come near our dear Mother's Immaculate Soul, she nevertheless compassionated intensely those whom She saw struggling in the thraldom of some strong passion, or fighting some persistent temptation, intuitively she felt how hard it was to fight thus, and knew also that the human will must do its share, as well as trust to the Help of God. It was a constant prayer of Our Lady's heart that the weak wills of men might be strengthened, for the Mother of the human race was gifted to feel and understand the weaknesses of her children. Let us watch Her with the young Roman, who is somewhat ashamed after his late outburst though he hardly knows, in his indignation, whether he really wishes to overcome his fault; but Our Lady waits till he grows calmer and others then, speak of other subjects, such the Catechumens and that he is acquainted with, and as the conversation gradually veers round to the subject of Our Lord's Life and Passion, of which no one could speak like Our dear Lady.

The young man's heart is touched again, as he thinks of that Innocent one, wrongfully condemned to so cruel a death, and Our Lady, softly asks, « Are you not honoured to he like Him, whom you say was so unjustly condemned? » and as she caught the half spoken answer. She tenderly added « You are but a child in the faith, as yet; presently you will be made a soldier of Christ, you will be enlisted in His service solemnly by one of those

Sacraments, of which I told you. He will equip you for His service, and you will be armed for the fight, and go forth into the world, unfurling the banner of your Leader, and your life will be happy and blest, both in this world and the next. You have made your resolve, bravely, have you not? » and the Mother's sweet eyes met the dark proud ones of the young Roman, whose face softened before her calm gaze, « God helping me, I will be faithful » he said and the thought of the wrong done him, the loss of his position, and the difficulties of his life seemed to melt as snow before the sun, in the presence of the Mother of the Crucified.

« As it was Peter's sermon », said Our Lady, « that brought you the faith, I would like you to receive from him the Sacrament that will make you a member of Christ's mystical Body, and will incorporate you into the Church. Peter will open the gates to you, then you will be able to prepare for those other Sacraments that will render you a perfect Christian; and Jesus will be your Brother, your Leader, and your King ».

« You, Lady, will be Mistress, my Mother and my Queen, will you not? ».

« So it is appointed unto me », answered Our Lady, « this is the Will of my Son, and you, in all your necessities may come to me, and find that I am your Mother, sent by God »,

« What are those other Sacraments that I shall receive, may I not know them now? »

« You cannot know them to day, the ground has to be prepared first. Go now to Peter, as I bid you, and then return to me after you have received his instructions ».

He then bid her farewell and left the room, carrying

with him her blessing and the promise of her prayers. As he was leaving the house he met St. John, whom he already was acquainted with, and said to him; « You are the Disciple whom Jesus loved, and to whom in dying He confided His Mother, saying you should be as Mother and son together, how happy you are. Would that it were I; I would devote my whole life to Her! »

« Ah, but you must remember », said St. John, « that Christ Who died for all had in that supreme moment all those for whom He suffered before Him; I was the only Apostle present to represent the Church to its dying Saviour, He mentioned me ».

Here the voice trembled and grew husky, and gently motioning the yonng man to a bench, and seating himself beside him, St. John, continued, « He told me to take His Mother as mine, but I knew that not to me only was that precious gift given, He left His Mother as legacy to the whole world. He gave Mary, ever Virgin, to the Church to be its Mother, and bade Her take His brethren as Her own children, She is Mother to all, and more to us than our own mothers are ».

« Then », said the young man, « When I am baptized, I also may claim Her as my own? »

« Every new Christian », said St. John, « is to her as another Christ. She receives all for Her heart is open to all. God shows His love to us through Her, and we realized what He meant when He likened His Love to that of a mother for her offspring, when we see the love His Mother shows us for His sweet sake ».

« Pray for me », said the young man, « I go to Peter, now pray that when I return I may be a Christian ».

St. John embraced him in his own tender fashion, and

having bid him God–speed, he returned to Our Lady. « Mother », he asked, « will you hasten the time for that young neophite to be baptized? From what I know of him he needs every grace he can obtain, for he has a hard fight to conquer himself ».

We may notice here the peculiar lowliness and hiddeness of St. John, whether it was a natural grace or whether he had gained it from his intercourse with our Blessed Lady, it seems to be quite characteristic of him. Do we not notice in that scene after the Resurrection, how St. Peter asks of him » Lord, what shall this man do? » as if he would not speak for himself. In the present instance he could have baptized the young Roman, for as a number of the College of Apostles he had received full powers from Our Lord but he preferred to leave it to St. Peter, though at the same time the charity of our Lord so filled his heart that he yearned to see the young Roman, with his strong passions, safe within the bosom of the Church; he feared also for him, that once out of Our Lady's presence, and no longer under Her softening influence, the old hatred and revenge would return, unless he was aided by the grace of Baptism.

How Our Lady loved St. John, as she saw his heart so full of the tender compassion of the Sacred Heart, and at the same time asking as a favour what he might have easily done himself.

« You are right », said Our Lady, in answer to his question, « That soul is in danger, and needs grace; go, and tell Peter from me, that Satan desires to sift that soul like wheat, and the Good Shepherd longs to clasp him in His arms, therefore let him hasten the day his Master so desires ».

Would that we could follow St. John on embassy of love! What a beautiful scene in the eyes of Heaven that meeting between the Apostles must have been: St. John so hidden and gentle, St. Peter so humble; St. Peter would salute St. John with such love. « You are welcome, Brother, have you a special message, do you bring me news of our Mother? How fares it with Her? Privileged one, to whom the Master left this charge? »

« She bids me tell you », said St. John, « that one who received the Faith through your words has been with her today, one who is in danger, and whom Satan has desired to sift like wheat ».

« Even as I », said St. Peter, ever ready to acknowlodge his denial and infidelity; John would not notice, but hastened to finish his message, he would not have said as much, but that he loved to deliver Our Lady's messages literally. « The Good Shepherd desires to place that strayed sheep on His shoulders, will you hasten his reception into the Church, and our Master will rejoice ».

« Tell me who he is and where I shall find him, and I will go to him, and when he is baptised I will bring him in is baptismal innocence to Our Mother, that She may prepare him, to receive the Fruit of Her Womb ».

Then St. John related the history of the young Roman noble, who had first gone to Peter's sermon through curiosity, and as he told the story of the wrong and injustice he had suffered, and of the difficulty he had to forgive, or overcome his feelings of revenge, St. Peter's heart was moved. « Poor young man », he said, how difficult, nay impossible, is it for human nature to act alone. We must help the wounded sheep, Our Mother's prayers are ascending to Heaven for him. I will send a safe messen-

ger for him, if I cannot find him myself. I know you like not to be long away from Her, of whom you have care, return and say that Peter will bring him, in his fresh Faith to Her, from whom he received his first instructions, there need be little delay ».

Whether Our Lady knew the events that took place at a distance or not, She never betrayed Her knowledge, but listened as if She was not already supernaturally informed of the events, so now She heard St. John's tale, and then said », God be praised for the zeal of Peter ».

« You are proud, dear Mother, of your elder son, and rightly so, each time I see him there seem to be fresh graces adorning his soul, and shedding brightness and sweetness all around. With how many graces has not the Holy Spirit adorned him! Many times do I thank my master for having chosen Peter to be our head, and pray that the graces, given him, both for himself and those confided to his care, may be known by many, and that seeing his good works they may glorify their Father, Who is in Heaven. To-morrow Peter will be here in any case, to relate what he has done, surely the Angels will guide his steps and bring that soul to him, as you desired. To-morrow, I will offer my Mass, that the Good Shepherd may bring that wandering sheep safe in to the fold ».

The next day there was, unusual commotion in the quiet house; St. Peter entered, hurriedly, pushing open the doors, hastily and leading the young Catecumen of yesterday; « Mother, here is your child, come for Your blessing »; and the haughty young Roman, knelt and said, « Lady, I am now God's child and yours. I seem hardly to know myself; the things of this world matter now but little, for I love and am loved by my God. How hidden

He is, He was near me and I knew it not! Henceforth I live for Him alone; the world and it vanities I despise. I would seek only the Kingdom of God and His justice; and I long that others may receive the grace that I have just received. Oh! if I had the powers of Peter, what joy would it not be to me to seek and save that which was lost ».

« All have not the same gifts from God », said Our Lady, « You are but a child in grace as yet, and God's designs in your behalf are not made manifest »: as She spoke St. John entered the room and having embraced St. Peter with his customary reverence, turned to the young man with his face, beaming with holy joy, « So this is our new little Christian, for whom the Mother prayed? »

« I have brought him here, a child of God », said St. Peter, « when he is properly prepared you will make him a soldier of Christ, and then dispense to him the mysteries known to the intiated ».

The early Christians always spoke thus guardedly of the Most Sacred Mysteries of Faith, as we find in old documents; one of which, in describing a tumult which arose during the celebration of Holy Mass, and the sacrilege which took place, the occurrence is described as taking place » during the Mysteries known to the faithful », while another, writing on the same event, says « They spilt the Blood of Christ ». Thus St, Peter did not mention the Blessed Sacrament to the young convert, but left it for Our Lady to explain that great Mystery to him. When the Apostles had left him, alone with Our Lady, he said, « You promised to tell me of other meetings with my God, that you called Sacraments, and which you said would take place when I was a Christian; are they

all as wonderful as the one I have just received? for I hardly know myself, I feel another man, what will those other Sacraments do for me? »

« The Sacrament of Confirmation, which Peter has told John to give you when are prepared, will fit you for a glorious combat, it will enable the weak will, to keep the other faculties in subjection, so that, when the hour for the fight arrives, you command, and all the powers of your soul obey. You are then a soldier of Christ, in all that He commands, all the laws He gives, you are subject to Him. You desire no other service, no other kingdom, but the Service and Kingdom of Christ. This is not easy to human nature, for it seeks satisfaction in natural things, in Confirmation the Spirit of God takes up His abode in your soul, strengthening it for good, filling it with desires after holiness, and making you a copy of the Holy Spirit. The grace of God has to be corresponded with by your own will, hence the necessity of curbing and subduing it; it is the sword with which you must fight Christ's battles, it has to be kept bright and ever ready for that glorious fight for which the Sacrament of Confirmation equips you. As to the other and greater joy that awaits you, there is time to wait, ere That is explained, to you. Thank your loving Master for the great work He has already wrought in you, and go in peace for His Blessing goes with you ».

XXV.

The first Communion of the young Roman convert.

It is the sunset of a beautiful Eastern day, and the sun is streaming through the open window, upon two faces, the fair Virgin-Mother, and the young Roman, the cathechumen of some weeks ago. Can it be the same haughty man? Where is the proud look and mien? His face is illumined not only by the rays of the setting sun, but, still more, by the internal light of love, that the Holy Spirit, has lit within.

Our Lady speaks, « The happy day is now near, and you my son, will meet your Lord, as you have so desired ».

« Is it not strange », said the youth, « Your words made me long so intensely to meet my Creator, I hardly dared to believe I would, only I could not doubt you. Now the great day has approached and tomorrow I meet my God. You will take your new son to the Altar, while your first son brings to me my Lord and Master ».

« And henceforth », said Our Lady, « Your lives will mingle. As the mother feeds her child at her breast, so Jesus draws the redeemed to Himself, and feeds them with His own Sacred Body and Blood ».

« It is through you that I have arrived at my present happy state, my highest hopes are about to be fulfilled and yet, I fear, Mother, that, mayhap I am too unworthy » He was silent, but our Lady took his hand in hers, « Felix », for so he had been called in Baptism, « this fear is but natural, God's first creatures ere they fell could run to Him, fearlessly in their joy and innocence, but after the fall,

they could no longer run to him, as before, and there is now that lingering fear between the Creator and the creature; but would you wish to put off that meeting with your God on account of it? Through the Eternal ages your God has waited for this moment, He longs to enfold you in His arms, and claim you as His Own, would you then disappoint Him? »

« Ah no », said Felix, « I am longing with an intense longing to meet my Lord and be united with Him ».

« You know Peter », said Our Lady, « He, when Jesus was on earth, spoke to Him, in his humility, saying « Depart from me O, Lord », though all the while he was longing to draw nearer, even as you are. That moment is fast approaching for which you have so looked forward and longed for; yet not as God Himself does, for so He spoke, « With desire have I desired », so when you meet Him in the morning, let this thought drive from you all dread, for you will think that you are fulfilling the desire of your God. Now remain at peace, distress not yourself about the past, it exists no more. You are God's child, the delight of His Heart, you haye journied to seek Him, and have found Him, but He first journied seeking you; you will rejoice and thank Him to morrow; and promise Him your fidelity and service ».

« And, Lady, I shall thank Him for bringing me to you, who taught me that God was on earth, I shall thank Him, and ask Him if I may be your son, for you have been more than a mother to me, and I can but think of you as such ».

What a beautiful work the Holy Spirit had wrought in that soul, thought Our Lady, as She looked on the ardent face of the young Christian, it was what that proud

Roman nature needed, the Love of Christ to subdue the haughty will, and love dwelt now in the soul, so lately full of hatred and revenge, « How shall I show my love of God? » said the young Christian, « He has been so good to me, that love exacts from me a return »; and Our Lady answered, « Jesus foresaw this longing in the hearts of those who love Him, and He said Whatsoever you have done to the least of My Brethren you have done it to Me ». « Our Lady saw that the right moment had come, « And now what about your adversary? » She asked. « Lady, He may have all I possess in this world, for I forgive him entirely ».

« He cannot take from you the place prepared for you in Heaven. All things work together for good to those who love God; a higher place will be prepared for you there, to make up for the one you lost here, and your adversary has done you good, not harm ».

« May the Everlasting God be praised for the wonder of His ways! My sorrow brought me to you, for which shall I be eternally grateful. Peter spoke to me of Jesus, the Just One, and John found me desperate, and brought me to you His Mother, and I have found all my heart craved for. I desire only that to morrow may come and complete my happiness ». St. John then entered, and as the young man asked his blessing, he laid his hand lovingly on his head, and said, « Felix, you are indeed happy », for St. John saw in the radiant face the joy of the Holy Spirit, « But », he continued, « Happy as you now are, at the thought of meeting your Lord in the morning, your heart is not exulting as is His, Oh! if you could realise His Love! If you had but seen Him, if you had but known Him ».

The emotion that always filled St. John, when he spoke of his Master, overcame him, and he left the room, rather than distress Our Lady by his grief, for the loss of Jesus' visible presence.

Felix looked after him, as he went, and then turning to our Lady, said « How he loved Jesus! »

« Yes », answered Our Lady », And how Jesus loved him; on the last evening in the life of Him Who is the Life of the world, as He sat at table with His Apostles, John, who then as now was called, the Beloved, by the others, leant his head on the bosom of Jesus, and Jesus caressed him, as a mother does her infant. It is no wonder he can scarcely speak of his Master without tears ».

« But you, Lady, are His Mother, and yet you speak so calmly, you shed no tears, who must feel more grief than all others together, you bravely bear sorrow that no one else has had to bear ».

« Felix », said Our Lady, « I have seen my heart's Love in sorrow and pain, now I know he is and ever will be supernally happy, and I can only rejoice, for and with Him ».

« To morrow, said the young Christian », I shall speak to Him of you, and beg Him to give His Mother to be mine also. How I long for that blessed moment! »

The morning came at last, and can we picture that little Oratory, prepared by Our Lady, with such love, for that First Communion of the new son, whom Her Divine Son had sent Her; can we imagine the joy of Felix as the Disciple of Love, first brought him the Sacrament of Love!

Ah! Say not then that this world is wretched or miserable, for it is a place where God manifests His Glory.

This little orb has a work to do in creation, and does it; they have little love for God who do not see how wonderfully He is glorified on earth. Every act of contrition increases His accidental Glory, and the Angels rejoice in a true sense more over the « Misereres » of earth, than over the « Te Deum » of the Blessed in Heaven. Love then this world, that God has so loved, that He sent His only begotten Son into the world, that the world by Him might be saved. Love it as a true Christian patriot loves his country only desirous, of its good. The mercy of God is above all His works, and this little world of ours glorifies its Creator by being the theatre of His Mercy; Each individual soul can increase God's Glory, if it will, it can and must perform acts that either increase the Kingdom of God, or, which God forbid, the Kingdom of His enemy.

Which will you choose? are you of the fold of Christ's One Church, or are you of the « Separated Brethren? » Make your prayer that you may have but one end in view, the extension of God's Kingdom, and the increase of His Glory, « Per omnia saecula saeculorum ».

Go back to the early ages of the Church, go back in spirit, and do what you would have done in body, had you lived in those days, go, and kneel at the feet of Mary, and ask her to teach you about Jesus, what He said and did, for you will ever find Jesus with Mary, His Mother.

XXVI.

Our Lady and a boy's Vocation.

Our object in these short Sketches has been to bring more clearly before our minds Our Lady's Life, after the Ascension of Jesus.

We have entered her little house in spirit, and have looked upon the simple every-day scenes which we believe were enacted there.

We have not imagined anything very extraordinary taking place; we have not contemplated the visits of angels, or saints, though it is piously believed that all through her life Our Blessed Lady had continual intercourse with those blessed spirits, of whom she was to be the Queen.

We have not dared to describe those visits of her Divine Son, which probably took place; we have only tried to picture her, performing those simple everyday actions which gained their surpassing beauty and value in the Eyes of God, from the perfection alone, with which she performed them.

We have not even referred to the Revelations of the Saints. We offer these pages merely as a few thoughts, that may aid others to increase in a more intimate, personal love of Our Lady, regarding her rather as a Mother, the Mother of all mankind, than as a beautiful being from another sphere, rather as one who understands, because she has shared the daily life, labour, sorrow and joy of human race.

We linger lovingly over the pictures we see of the quiet home of St. John.

We imagine that we see Our Lady with a young boy

kneeling beside her, looking, earnestly into her face and as we draw near in spirit, we hear her describing that beautiful Gospel scene, the meeting of Jesus with the rich young man, who came to Him and asked « What shall I do that I may receive Life everlasting? » and how Jesus said sweetly, « by keeping the Commandments ».

Slowly and rather sadly Mary recounted that scene how the eager answer of the young man; « Master, all this I have done from my youth », brought the offer of the priceless gift of a Vocation to follow Our Lord; how Jesus looking upon him, loved him, and bade him leave all things and follow Him. It came as God's gifts often do, as a reward for sacrifices already generously made; for the young man must have overcome his will, and denied himself in many things, to have kept the Commandments from his youth up, for in our present existence to have given up our own will and always to have conformed to the Divine Will necessitates great sacrifices.

Thus does Our Lady explain the incident; and the boy to whom she speaks tells her, simply, how hard he feels it to renounce his will, and often fails in doing so. Our Lady knows this, and for that reason she speaks so earnestly, « There is always the danger of relaxing even after long years of selfdenial, and this ardent soul, who had done so much was unprepared for this last sacrifice « Sell what thou hast; give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven, and come, follow Me ».

As she spoke, Our Lady's face grew more radiant, « My son, she continued, calling him by his name » if you could only realise the greatness of this gift of God, the vocation to follow Jesus, and how the angels follow with love and reverence the steps of those who walk the way

of the Blessed, your heart would overflow with joy and gratitude. Jesus Himself holds such souls pressed close to His Heart. Oh! that you could understand what these Words – Come, follow Me, meant and what was lost when that call was not obeyed! » Tears rose to Our Lady's eyes, as she thought of the young man, whom Jesus looking upon, had loved, but who went away sad for he had great possessions *.

The boy's earnest, eager voice, gladdened her heart as he said, « Mother, ask Jesus to call me and I will follow Him to death ».

« By the grace of God, always say that », Our Lady said gently, for his words sounded like the echo of the ardent cry of St. Peter, and she thought of the sad fall that followed it » Watch and pray, and listen for His voice; « Vacate et videte ». Mary rejoiced at the work of the Holy Ghost in the young soul, and prayed that God might perfect it, perfect the work He had begun in him; but she spoke words of loving counsel, that he cherished in his heart, and which, in after years brought forth abundant fruits.

The Mother continued, « Your prayer is not earnest enough, you must wrestle in prayer, the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent alone bear it away. My son, we wrestle indeed, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and the powers of darkness, against the rulers of this world of darkness, against

(*) There is a tradition that this young man though he failed at the moment, did not fall from grace and after Pentecost fulfilled his delayed vocation, and as St. Barnabas, sold his land and laid its price at the Apostles' Feet (Acts. IV. 36. 37). If this were indeed true, how Our Lady would press on the boy with whom she spoke the truth that he had all the Pentecostal grace, and that therefore, delay with him would be even more perilous than it was with Barnabas. How lovingly would she urge him not to lose his vocation!

the spirits of wickedness in high places. It is true; but you have yet more to fear from your own poor weak nature, that finds it always hard to make the sacrifice God asks of you ».

We can hardly imagine anyone being positive or obstinate in Our Lady's presence, but alas! were there not those who were obstinate with the Lamb of God Himself? Are we not often stubborn with dear Jesus? do we not often air our opinions about things that are far above our reach, criticising the things of God as if we had a right to do so? We allow so many egoistical ideas to grow up within us, instead of crushing them at the beginning. We think we are right, our own opinions are correct, but other people have been unjust, or unwise. We will say, and do anything rather than honestly acknowledge that such and such feelings are not like Our dearest Lord. Let us learn our lesson afresh at Mary's feet, let us learn to know our temptations and to fight with them, at whatever cost to our pride and self-love. You, who are now unquiet, uneasy, and restless, go to our Mother, learn a lesson she would teach us « Watch and pray », she repeats so earnestly, so pleadingly.

Think of Jesus in His terrible agony, disappointed in the love of those whom He had come to seek. Think how you watch the face of one whom you love and rejoice if they smile upon you, and what a pang it causes if they look coldly, unkindly, or bitterly upon you; and you ponder every word, every look, every detail of the conduct of the dear one who pained you.

Jesus looked into the faces of all future generations, longing for the love of each human soul, and in how many souls was He not disappointed.

« Poor Jesus Christ », with all reverence we use St. Alphonsus Liguori's expression, Poor Jesus! the Man-God, with that exquisitely tender human Heart saw all generations of the human race pass before Him, and He called all so lovingly to Him, but He met from so many not merely carelessly averted looks, but also disdainful cold, ungrateful ones. These things Mary would speak of with a voice so touching in its tenderness, with the light of the Holy Ghost surrounding her sweet face.

Those who saw and heard her, went away like the young boy of whom we were speaking, filled with that zeal, that heavenly fire, which Jesus came to cast upon the earth.

Our Lady, then as now inspired souls with a great earnestness, inducing them to look at their lives practically, and it would have been difficult to say in her presence those words by which misguided, weak souls seek to excuse themselves.

« I meant no harm; I had no intention of comitting sin ». Mary taught all to be on their guard against that subtle enemy, who does mean harm.

God's creatures on earth are often weak and very sinful, but they are not devils. There is much in that; we do wrong, not out of hatred to God, and His Holy Law, but because we want to gratify ourselves in some unlawful way; and we do not want to cross our own will. The devils want to sin that they may displease and defy God, there are few, we may trust on earth who commit sin with this diabolical sentiment of actual hatred for God. Ah! may He preserve us from ever knowing what that state is like, wherein creatures hate their Creator, and want to revenge themselves upon Him. Let us

study and try to understand the Will of God, and let us make every day one deliberate act of mortification of our wills in some matter in which we are entirely free, so that by this means we may become masters of our own will, and able to curb it when tempted to break the law of God.

Over and over again, Our Lady would urge the necessity of fighting with temptations, and of the careful watch we should keep over the desires and imaginations of our hearts; and would show how nearly all the miseries of human life arise from not fighting the good fight.

Ah! if today we could hear the lessons our Heavenly Mother was wont to teach the early Christians, how favoured we should think ourselves!

Still can we not make acts of Faith, believing that God, having appointed His earthly children a Mother, He has also given her a power to hear and help them, and can we not make acts of Hope, and Love, as we kneel at our Mother's side and ask her for all the graces we need, trusting to her Maternal love and goodness, to help us if we are docile? Let us fight on, then and take courage. God is with those who trust Him! Many are the temptations with which we have to struggle and we often do not know our danger, till it has passed, or we have unhappily fallen into the plot laid for us.

Mother, raise your hand in benediction over your children, and help poor tempted souls.

Dear Jesus, teach them to know Thy Mother as the Christians of old knew her, that with confidence in such a Mother we may sing songs in Sion; that is, glorify our God and sanctify our own souls by our lives of gladness and grateful hope in Him.

Mater Boni Consilii, ora pro nobis.

XXVII.

Our Lady with the Dying.

Let us imagine we see the Mother above all Mothers at the dying bed. The sick person is the very image of Jesus to her, reflecting in his sickness the sufferings and death of the Immaculate Lamb of God. It would be good for us all to try to realize what each one of us is to our Blessed Lady. Her heart goes to that sick person, the Fruit of Jesus' Passion. He is one of the Redeemed; upon the soul of that poor sufferer is imprinted the likeness of the Ever Blessed Trinity. Mary, ever united with her Spouse the Holy Ghost, with love raised to heights far above our understanding bends over the sick bed, to whisper to the creature sweet words of love from God its Creator, a message from the Redeemer to His own.

If Mothers only knew their loveliness in the sight of God, as they watch the sick bed of their children striving to keep their will, up to the heights of union with the Divine Will. Oh! it is hard, poor Mothers, to see your children suffer, but if you knew how dear you are to God at that moment; if you knew the graces He is pouring upon you and your child, you would rejoice. Your soul is blooming into a beauty, which we cannot call unearthly, for resignation to the Divine will, in times of trial, is one of earth's greatest beauties. Unite yourselves, always, with Our Blessed Lady, who could not even wipe the Face of Jesus, who could not relieve one pain, or assuage the slightest pang. She heard that pitiful cry « I thirst » wrung from His silent patient Lips, by the very extremity of His anguish and could not give

Him one drop of cold water, to cool His parched tongue. Think what it must have been to stand, and see and hear all, and yet be powerless to relieve that agony, even in the slightest degree. Is there any trial more keenly felt, by a loving heart, than the inability to help or comfort a loved one in sorrow or suffering, and by what rule then can we measure Mary's grief on Calvary?

For that reason we can easily believe Our Lady loved to visit the early Christians, when they were ill or dying. Even to our weak faith and love it is a joy to think we are in truth ministering to our Lord Himself, when we minister to His afflicted ones, and Our Lady would see again in the sufferer, the likeness of Him « who had borne our infirmities ».

St. John, perhaps, would not wish our Lady to see his anxiety regarding her, for he was ever trying to spare Her, thinking of Her comfort, trying to save Her over fatigue but Mary's Maternal Heart, was filled with that same sweet charity, which years ago as a young girl, made her take that toilsome journey across the mountains of Judea to visit her cousin, St. Elizabeth, when she heard she was about to become a Mother. So when she heard of sickness among the Christians the same loving kindness urged her to go to them; more especially if it was a case of sickness unto death; the same or rather a greater love filled her heart, for were not those early Christians, the first children of that vast family of Christ, of which she was to be the Mother? Therefore she would hasten to visit and comfort them, and do for them what She could not do for Jesus Himself, in His Agony.

St. John ever accompanied his beloved Mother, in in her visits to the sick, and would often in spirit go

through that scene on Calvary, as he watched Her beside the dying bed. He would think of how they looked up at Jesus' Face, and at the Blood, slowly trickling from the piercing of the thorns, this would come back to him, so vividly, as he watched Mary as she wiped the death sweat from the face of one perhaps, but recently baptized, or a young Catechumen, on whose head the saving waters may have been poured, in Her presence. She would gently soothe the restless frame, and moisten the parched feverish lips, thus supplying to the redeemed the many little ministeries of Maternal love, she could not give the Redeemer in His hour of need.

We are trying to consider our Mother as she visits and consoles the sick, but what an untold grace and consolation must not her visible presence have been to those who were actually struggling in the throes of death? To look to the last on her sweet Face, to leave this world with the sound of her soft voice in our ears, after the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, could earth hold a greater boon for us than that?

Without doubt, this was the privilege of many who died in those first years and Our Lady would help them to resist the dire temptations of that last hour, breathing words of wondrous wisdom and love into their ears, and by her prayers and presence, helping them to overcome the enemy. In few words she would encourage them to suffer, speaking of Calvary, as only She could, to telling them how pleasing to Her Divine Son, is this wellborne suffering, offered in union with His, and thus by her presence, full of grace and sympathy, would she aid the poor sufferer in that last supreme struggle, till he passed beyond the Portals of Eternal Life. To the sor-

rowing relatives, she was not less a comfort, and help, and the words of consolation which She always spoke, sank deep into their hearts, and left a sense of thankfulness, even amid their grief. Let us always remember that Mary is our Mother as much as she was the Mother of the early Christians. We shall need her presence in that dread struggle between Life and Death, as much as they did, or perhaps more; let us then make it our fervent daily prayer that She may come to us, in that supreme hour, not visibly indeed, we dare not ask for such a favour as that, but that by her invisible intercession, she may help us to the end.

Have we learnt to know Our Lady any better, to live more in Her Company? Are we striving to offer Jesus, some of the fragrant incense of her life? If these little considerations on the different scenes in that wonderful life of Hers, have helped us to gather flowers for her, of virtues and good resolutions, do not let them wither, but offer them fresh to our Lady. How you will please her; her children on earth can do so much. Think, dear readers, you can gather flowers now, that you cannot in Heaven. what a pity, then, to lose this precious time, these fleeting moments, that may do so much to secure us a happy Eternity!

What indeed is the longest life, compared with Eternity? Even a 100 years (and how few live so long), what are they compared with the never ending ages of Eternity? Let us take heart, and try to spend the brief years of life in our Lady's Company, in union with Her, and thus, having lived our lives with Her, when the end draws near she will come, and will bring Her Divine Son, and our death like our life, will be blessed by her holy presence and her prevailing prayers.

XXVIII.

Our Lady and the Holy Land.

As we should confidently expect, the whole of Palestine breathes, so to speak, of the Mother of God. Many places, as we know from Holy Scripture and authentic tradition, are sacred with memories of her; and many more are associated with her name. The Mahometans, who have a great reverence for our Lady, and even acknowledge her Immaculate Conception *, are full of legends regarding her, some or many of which may well be historical facts. They point out where she stayed and what she did; here at her prayer, water filled a dry well; under that tree she rested with her Child on the long road to Egypt; in such a spot she was wont to pray. Let us picture one such sacred site and consider its associations.

Our Lady and St. John are bidding good-bye to their native land. Their way leads them through valleys and over hills trodden by the Divine Feet of Christ. On the edge of an overhanging cliff our Lady pauses, and St. John sees an expression of pain cross her face. « What is it, Mother? » And Mary answers : « Here I stood and watched the day His own fellow towsmen of Nazareth thrust « Him forth from the synagogue, and tried to precipitate Him from yonder hill. At that moment the sword « indeed pierced my soul, and my body shook with « fear. Even now the remembrance thrills me through ». (They still point out this rock, which bears the name of

(*) So Lady Herbert relates in her « Cradle Lands ».

« Tremore » from the *trembling* of our Lady). « He is in Eternal joy now » she continued, « with those who « love Him, whom He purchased and delivered from « bondage. How will I rejoice to see you His beloved « disciple again on His Bosom there ». St. John's eyes filled with tears; how wonderful was the loving thought of Mary, ever for her children. Not her own joy, but theirs, was the object of her solicitude. The Apostle loved to watch her perfections, the manifestation of her Heart in her speech and acts. And his was the trust, his, the responsibility, to guard, protect, care for, that Immaculate Mother. Who was he that his Lord had confided to his care the supreme treasure of God's creation ?

St. John looked up, Mary was praying. Was it for all suffering mothers ? She had borne a sorrow beyond all other human sorrow with unflinching courage, yet she shrank from others having to suffer and would fain save them from it if she could. She would save them from even a mortification if it were in her power, as at the wedding feast of Cana.

How hard our hearts seem when we think of her tenderness! And when we remember what she had to endure, – and the scene of the « Rock of Precipitation » was but one moment in the passion of the Queen of Martyrs – we surely must better realize God's love to us in trusting to us a share of His Cross. The Eternal Father spared not His Only-Begotten Son, and He spared not His Sons's Mother. And all bearing of the cross, in whatever degree, makes us partakers with God and with God's Mother.

This is but one picture out of many we might draw from our Lady's connection with the Holy Land. Christian hearts can trace others for themselves. What we

pray is that those who read these simple thoughts may be led to read between the lines many loving thoughts that are not expressed.

Our object, as we have already said, is to bring her nearer, to make her dearer, to our hearts. But this we cannot do unless those who read are trying to keep their souls in harmony with the grand sweet music of Mary's life, for so only can we be touched by and respond with melody. The human heart is a beautiful instrument, but the best instrument may rust, and then discord takes the the place of harmony.

Our love of our Blessed Lady will grow as we dwell upon her life, and such incidents as that we have been dwelling on, though only traditions or loving thoughts, may help us to understand a little better something more of her impassing beauty.

XXIX.

Our Lady and St. John leaving Jerusalem.

We know the present gradual stages in the ranks of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy did not always exist, and it is believed that, at that First Ordination, at the Last Supper, the Apostles were not only ordained Priests, but some among them were also consecrated Bishops. We know that within a short time after our Lord's Death, St. James the Less was in charge of the see of Jerusalem, and St. John took care of that of Ephesus. There are two traditions, regarding the latter Apostle, one is that St. Peter, appointed him Bishop of Ephesus, therefore

Our Lady went with him to his new abode, for since the sad day, when he took her « to his own » she never quitted him till her death.

The other account has it that such a violent persecution had broken out in Jerusalem (St. James, the brother of St. John being one of the first victims) that the beloved Disciple, fearing for Our Lady's safety, persuaded her to retire with him to Ephesus, and during their sojourn there the Prince of the Apostles, put him in charge of that see.

It is piously believed that Our Lady returned to Jerusalem, before her death and that those members of the Apostolic College that were absent, received some mysterious intimation of their approaching loss, and returned in time to bid a last farewell, to their, Queen and Mother. Our Lady may have felt her strength failing, or she may have received a warning from those messengers of God, the Angels, and returned in time to die in the Land she had hallowed by her life.

We have striven, throughout these papers, to picture Our Lady, in such a natural manner, as might make us know her better. We have tried to consider what a good Christian Mother feels when her Son is made a priest and what then were our Lady's feelings regarding the perfection of Priesthood? That is the wonderful dignity of the Bishop; he is bound by his state to aim at perfection. He is a pastor, nearer to His Lord, more in union with His Sacred Heart. A greater reverence is due to him, for he represents the Holy Father, to his flock, therefore, Our Lady, as the perfection of all Motherhood, rejoiced with her son, St. John, in his possession of this great dignity.

She saw how, her Spouse, the Holy Ghost, gave the Bishop, special gifts, and She rejoiced over the pure soul of St. John, that not only received these gifts but knew how to use them: his angelic mind understanding more clearly than almost any other why they were given, penetrating, in a marvellous manner, the designs of God. Ah! St. John, multiply pure souls on earth; plead for priests taught by Mary, fashioned by her on the model of the sacred Heart!

If we have ever watched a holy mother making the vestments for her son, can we not imagine Our Lady, with far greater love, doing various similiar services for St. John? In the temple she had doubtless often embroidered and prepared the vestments for the Priests of the Mosaic Law; and though in the early days of Christianity vestments such as we now use, were not peculiar to the service of God, nevertheless we may be sure, our Lady would prepare, with much love all that St. John might require, in the exercise of his sacred functions. It is good to consider such details as these, for it brings our Lady so much nearer to us, and it is not well to have a fixed impression of our Lady, as being always in prayer, it is not a help to devotion, if considered to the exclusion of other phases of her life. Those pictures represent her to us in an attitude of prayer, or with arms outstretched are very lovely, but they have not always had the good effect of making us *know* our Lady, and what we may call, our Lady's character. It does not seem so clearly defined, without corresponding pictures, in our mind, at least, of the way in which she performed the ordinary duties of life.

Our Lady was not an ecstatica the beauty of her life

was in its simplicity, She could bear the Divine touch, without ecstacies and swoons. She was God's Own Immaculate Conception, His Spotless Creature; She could speak with Her God walk in His presence, with a greater union than the highest contemplative could ever attain to. We may consider her as the model of all good mothers, preparing the Sacred vestments for St. John, and we wonder if any relics of our Lady's handiwork still exist, for how they would be valued! We are told of many wonderful relics, that have been preserved and we almost wonder how they were kept, if they are authentic; such for instance as the girdle of our Lady, at a place, called Prato, near Florence, her ring at Perugia, a portion of her veil at Sta. Anastasia, at the foot of the Aventine, a letter believed to be written by her in Messina, Sicily, the Staff of St. Joseph, and many others of the same kind, but we do not remember hearing of any relic of Our Lady's work. They say that many most valuable relics existed in our own country, and which may be discovered when England is once more Catholic (and may God hasten the day); among them are mentioned a Relic of the Precious Blood, and the chalice or cup used by our Lord at the Last Supper. If such a legend is correct perhaps the ancient Dower of Mary may possess some great relics of our Blessed Lady, of which we as yet know nothing.

We were considering our Lady's life in St. John's house. The days went, quietly on, until, perhaps, the last sacrifice of leaving Jerusalem, drew from Mary's heart, a fresh « Fiat » -- that heavenly melody which Mary teaches her children to make on earth. Have not many through her example, striven to study that wonderful harmony, of our wills with that of God and in their mea-

sure to reproduce it? May Mary's children live her life of sacrifice, and may the Fiats continually ascend, and that music of Her Immaculate Soul will still be echoed in this world. We cannot produce it, in all its grandeur, but God will be pleased with our poor efforts, and will listen to our little attempts, with Divine Benevolence, Good God that He is.

Mary would doubtless visit many of the holy places, in and around Jerusalem, before she left the Land of Judea. She knelt at the tomb of St. Joachim and Anne, and thanked God for the good parents His Divine Providence had bestowed on her. In every particular of Her Life, She was most perfect; she began her life with gratitude, and we see her ending it, in the same spirit. Ever humble she thanked God for the good things He had done to her, always acknowledging it was of His Own Goodness that these gifts came to her. What did she not owe her Saintly parents? Without them, would she have been God's Immaculate Conception which she knew she was? Would She have been the Mother of Jesus?

Thus, she thought, as she knelt at her mother's tomb; She might not have been that favoured Virgin, who brought the Messias, into the world. She spoke thus to the mother, whom she had missed more as the years went on, and to whose loved remains she was now biddnig farewell. All that SS. Joachim and Anne had been to her, had done for her, made her pure soul, swell with gratitude and love, and the sweet human heart of our Lady, would yearn to show them love, though she knew they were with God, and enjoyed all beatitude.

The good leave a void behind them, we feel some beauty has gone from this world. My reader, a word

to you! Multiply your acts of love and dutifulness, if you have your parents, still with you; years hence you may wish you had this power, when they are no longer here. We miss our loved ones, when they are taken from us, even though we feel as did the author of the little poem, « My three Sons », the one who died was so greatly, missed, but how well the father speaks, « I'd sooner lose my other two than bring him back again! »

Yes, we may have pure disinterested love and feel thus, and yet we want to see those dear faces again, we want to hear the voice of the good and true, for they made this earth more beautiful by their presence.

Our Lady's sensitive soul, ever tender of others, also thought that she would soon leave the void she felt to others. She must soon leave the world, and then, what of poor St. John? She looked up. How his poor heart would be again pierced. And Our Lady, ever feeling for all, breathed a prayer that God would comfort him.

St. John saw the change on her Face; « Mother, you are tired, should we return? »

Her look seemed to him more loving than ever, for it was tinged with compassion, at the thought of the fresh wound he would receive, in that already bruised heart. We think, of Thee, Sweet Mother, with one thought on earth, ever, ever for others, feeling their slightest pain, anxious to alleviate sorrow where she could, or to strengthen the soul to bear it, by giving some strength, full of Divine consolation.

Have we never received such? Ah! how often, but we knew not it was our Mother, fulfilling her office as « Mother of Men » And is it not, most truly, the Mother's

work to comfort and console? God Himself tells us this, by the mouth of His prophet », as one whom the Mother caresseth, so will I comfort you, and you shall be comforted ». (Isaias LXVI, 13).

Seek, then this mother in sorrow, you who suffer, She is the « Consolatrix Afflictorum », and she will bring you help perhaps, unthought of by you, for She gives Her own, one of God's chosen gifts, the grace of suffering well.

The Apostles, the brethren of Jesus, sought it as their right; there was no apology, or thought that they would be troubling our Lady with their griefs. She was their Mother; they entered her presence and sat at her feet, and Her words were a manifestation to them of God, and brought their Master back to their minds.

How can some people, now-a-days think of that time, and yet believe that Christ, was loved by His own. but His Mother was not? Poor deluded people! How we pity you, so unlike the early Christians, who loved to turn with confidence to Her, who was left them by Her Divine Son to comfort them for the loss of His visible presence.

We can easily imagine St. John would stoop and occasionally pick some of the foliage of the various sacred spots, to keep as souvenirs in their exile, and it gives rise to the thought, of how much more spiritual we might be, if we connected many little practices, with past events and acts performed by holy people.

For instance the little custom we have of giving our friends, flowers, from the Holy Land, plucked and placed on holy places, might perhaps have originated as far back as that favoured period we are now contemplating, and by it we may bring our Lady a little nearer to our minds.

Her pictures represent her, more or less faithfully, to us outwardly, but we want to bring Her more into our hearts and homes. With the promise, that no theologian has ever exaggerated, or even adequately described the grandeur of Mary, we also want to bring the simplicity of Her earthly life before our readers, so that they may see both united, for as a devout writer tells us, « Simplicity is never incompatible with grandeur ».

Mary was grand, in her simplicity at the Annunciation; she was grand at the finding in the Temple, where she spoke simply and to the point. Mary was always simple as the doves themselves. The perfection of her nature made her also capable of bearing great graces, which would have produced ecstasies and swoons in the Saints. St. Teresa saw Our Lord's Hand, and fainted; Our Lady encompassed Him, She brought Him forth, she gazed upon Him, but she swooned not *.

We have digressed, for we were picturing St. John, picking leaves and flowers from some sacred spots; and Our Lady would thank him, placing them where she could carry them, safely to that new home, which could never be as hallowed or as sacred, as her beloved Jerusalem. We cannot follow Mary in that second flight, from Jerusalem, we know nothing of those who accompanied her. Some traditions mention St. Mary Magdalene, but, however that may be, no matter who was with her, she must surely have felt keenly that exile from the land ren-

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(*) It is related of the Saintly parish priest of Ober. — Ammergau, who had so much to do with the perfecting of the Passion Play, that it was once suggested to him that the scene of the crucifixion would gain in intensity of emotion if our Lady were represented as fainting beneath the Cross. Father Darsimberger's only reply was « Scripture says she stood ».

dered so dear to her, by the marvellous privileges God had bestowed on her, in the Incarnation, the Hidden Life the Public Life and the Death of Jesus. If these mysteries are so full of joy and wonder to us, what must they have been to Mary?

As Our Lady and St. John bid farewell to the favoured spots that they had so often visited together, we can picture them retracing the way of the Cross, thus, as it were anticipating that beautiful devotion of the « Via Crucis », and we love to follow in spirit, the Mother and the Disciple, walking in the Footprints of Jesus.

All who visit Jerusalem, speak of an indescribable sensation, a feeling of the nearness of God, and this amid so many distractions, that, in most places, would certainly take devotion, away from many. What must that land, then fresh with the Blood stains of Jesus, have been to Mary?

Those rocks, had echoed His Voice, ah! those rocks could tell tales of sorrowful scenes. There is one, where it is said, Our Lady stood, when the jews seized our Lord, with the intention of casting Him, down from the brow of the mount on which He stood, and our Lady, from the other side of the ravine saw Him in their hands, but was powerless to save Him; then, so the legend says, He passed through the midst of the crowd, untouched and went His way. We shudder as we think our Lady's agony, during those few moments of suspense, and poor St. John would watch her face as he led Her from spot to spot, for fear the recollection of the sad scenes enacted there would be too much for her!

There was the place where Simon was forced to carry the Cross, to help Jesus, had he seen the sorrowful look

of Mary at his reluctance? Perhaps St. Veronica also saw the scene, the Mother's pain, the drooping Body of Jesus, and Simon's ungenerosity; the look in Mary's face touched her, as well as filled her with compassion for Jesus, and she brought relief, a feeling of gratitude to Mary, by the act which will never be forgotten. How Mary loved Veronica for this, and how it made up to her for the pain she had felt; knowing what the Heart of Jesus endured, seeing it was not easy to find one willing to carry His Cross. Are we selfish and ungenerous, when Jesus appears with a cross, which He asks us to bear for Him?

The sepulchre is reached, and a blessing goes out from Mary's Heart to Joseph of Arimethea for giving the Body of Jesus this last resting place on earth. It was all consumated here, the wonders of God's Mercy to man, and the words of her own Magnificat came back to her « And His mercy, is from generation unto generation; as He promised to our Fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever ».

Again the jews are prayed for, they must come back to God, they must know Christ Her Son; and Mary looks into the future generations of men, and She offers them to God, redeemed as they are by the Blood of the Man-God, Jesus. She the Mother, offers the fruit of her womb, to the Eternal Father, « Save thy People Oh God, redeemed by the Precious Blood of Thy Son, they must be saved ».

As an open volume Mary saw the Book of Life, we who see it not, still hope, for we draw near to our Mother's Heart to learn it. « Hope of the Heart of Mary, sustain me, plead my cause before God ».

The events that have now taken place in the world,

Mary saw in vision; Pontiffs of Christ, Martyrs, Virgins, Confessors of all ages, who have washed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb, beautiful fruits of the Passion.

What is there yet to come? We do not know, but we may surmise, Saints of an extraordinary beauty, Saints after that Heart, that expressed its longing. « Behold I make all things new! »

They are not « made new » yet, dear Lord; hasten that glad time, which Thou hast promised us; multiply Saints on the earth, so that they be the rule, rather than the exception. May the Church rise after the storms, calm, beautiful, anchored to Thy Mother's Heart. Say to the nations, dear Jesus, « Peace be to you », that peace, which the world can neither give nor take away.

John had retired as Mary prayed on Calvary; what a prayer was that, for there can be no doubt that she possessed the great gifts bestowed upon the Saints, in a supereminent degree. Mary saw the future, the glorious future. The fruit of Jesus' Passion came before her a glorious Procession, the Pontiffs, Martyrs, Confessors, the pious families; Christ's Church, in all its beauty, more beautiful from the storms that assailed it, brighter from each battle. Mary saw this glad vision and rejoiced.

Her Magnificat arose again, with fresh gratitude, as She praised God for His goodness to the children of men, for the great things He had done for their salvation.

Mary prayed for the multiplication of Saints: do we think of this sufficiently?

We pray for the conversion of sinners, which indeed, is good, but let us also pray, that Saints may abound, for the greater glory of God. It is a prayer most acceptable to the Sacred Heart. Pray with the Mother, that

many may arise, imbued with the Spirit of God, and using His Power. On Calvary Mary also prayed for holy priests filled with the spirit of Calvary. Let us make that prayer, also, our own.

As She arises, John approaches, pleased to see her face different from what he had expected.

« Mother, you have had joy here », where you had so sorrowed.

« I have, John; I have thanked the Almighty for those I see, who are to come, glorious and beautiful through the Passion of my Son. Varied is their beauty, great is their glory, and the tide of the Precious Bood flowing on and on, bears such lilies of loveliness, that my soul again praised my God, and I remembered no more, my anguish here, for joy that Sons of God are born, followers of Christ ». And the Mother's face seemed more beautiful than ever, (if that were possible) to John, as She spoke of her joy in the Holy Ghost.

We hear of the exterior beauty of that most perfect one, from many sources and ancient traditions. St. Dionysius, the Areopagite said he would have taken her for a goddess, if Faith has not taught him differently and we read the same, in several writings. We dare not attempt to describe that remarkable beauty; we wait to see it, reflecting the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, when, as we humbly hope, He will speak those sweet words, to us, « Well done, thou good and faithful servant », and Mary will share and increase her children's joy that day.

St. John stood, and wondered at the joy depicted on the Mother's face. « You, my son, are part of my joy, and those who will follow you, walking in the Master's path, and protecting my children, as you have protected

their Mother, thus, as the Most High decreed. The sons who follow you to whom you will be a model, will increase your glory. I have prayed for them, here where my Son brought them into being by the shedding of His Blood ».

Here John, gently said, « And He gave them to thee, Mother, a reward for Thy suffering Heart; He gave them to Thee, to cherish as Thine Own. Oh may His name, be ever blessed, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus! They are thine, dear Mother, for He gave them to thee, They are my brothers, whom I will protect for love of my Master, and for love of thee, whose they are, to whom they will consecrate themselves in obedience to the Divine will ».

Was not earth beautiful at that moment? The designs of the evil one, were frustrated. God had looked upon the world, and gave it a blessing exceeding the primeval one, that He gave it ere it had fallen.

Let us ask it how, by the seed of Mary, for all things come to us through Her, and to delight in God is Her gift to Her own. May we, with Mary, walk this earth, singing and making melody in our hearts!

XXX.

The farewell look at the Temple.

We all know what it is to say good bye to some loved spot, about which our heart strings seem bound and from which severance is very bitter. What had the Temple been to Our Lady, in her youth, we might almost say her infancy?

It had once seemed like entering Heaven for while it possessed the Holy of Holies, it was as a foretaste of Heaven on Earth. God had once visited His people there, a white cloud, symbolising the divine presence in the Sanctuary. God was there. His people had known it; felt it. It must have been someting like our Benediction for between the adoring Angels there was God, speaking to the hearts of His own.

What had not these visits to the Temple been to the Immaculate Virgin? Mind of man cannot comprehend it. Mary's soul was filled with a joy we know not, for we are fallen and have lost this joy but the fall had never touched Mary « macula originalis non est in te ».

She enjoyed a bliss on earth, as glorious to her God, as it was delightful to herself.

We must here disgress to ask two things, to present two thoughts to our readers. Is the worship of our separated brethren at all like the worship of God's own people under the Old Law? Where are there Churches like the ancient Temple with this hidden presence of God, worshipped in it, which those outside the Church until recent years did not even pretend to?

Our Lord came to restore all things; the wreck of His magnificent work the world, was great, but were the words spoken in vain « I come to make all things new? ».

Then, dear Lord! are we to repine, as though the world had not been redeemed? as though the evil had not been repaired, the debts paid?

Is this the right tone to use regarding God's magnificent creation, and its grand redemption? Should we be always repining and not rather thanking and praising God.

We know not how the Immaculate One sang « Jubi-

late » and « Laudate » but the world had never known such praise as rose from her pure soul. She knew indeed the Creator. She knew indeed, that He deserved more than she could ever give. She loved to behold how God fulfils the desires of Hes adoring Children. She left the temple to go to her own house and in later years she came again and again to those sacred courts with Jesus. His little feet had pattered on those stones; how she remembered it all as she gazed on that Temple before she left Jerusalem. The Heavens had bowed down, God had become Incarnate in her womb. The spiritual Presence she had enjoyed in the Temple, had been exchanged for the visible presence of Her God, in a stable. For thirty years she had rejoiced in His presence, she had heard Him speak; that very Temple had echoed with His voice, the road she passed He also had trodden. And now she herself was leaving the once chosen city. « Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem! » The Mother echoed the cry of the Son « how would I have gathered thy Children to my breast, as a hen doth her chickens but Thou wouldst not ».

Mother, dear Mother, Jesus said how He would gather all men to Himself, and He has bidden us honour Thee, His Mother: we have learned of Him and we have come to thee.

In all parts of God's Church, this month special honour is paid to thee. Indeed, in all months and on all days, the name of Jesus is honoured through thee, by the Gentile Nations whom He has given to be thine, dear Mother.

The Mother who stood on Calvary loves all for whom Christ died. « Christ died for all » « Come all to me. I

am Thy Mother ». Gladly we obey thy call. We have come to thee, we nestle in thy arms, we have given our hearts and souls to thee, we are thy own and we cry « Domina mea, O mater mea memento me, esse tuum ».

Memento ! Mary does remember she is man's Mother and she remembers no more her anguish for joy that God has given her children in this word to prepare to follow Jesus on Earth and gather around Her Throne in the Eternal home prepared for those who have been faithful to her divine Son.

We will join thy prayer, mother, for that once favoured people of God, who are now so little loved on earth. We have come near to thy heart, and as we consider thee looking upon Jerusalem * pitying those misguided ones, echoing the prayer of Jesus, « Father for give them ». how can we fail to join thee ? They must be brought back to God, that they may indeed glorify His mercy patience and condescension. Mother, through thy intercession hasten the day of their conversion !

We may imagine that Mary and John visited other spots ere they quitted that favoured place, so sacred and so hallowed.

Our Lady in all probability visited the Tombs of St. Joachim and St. Anne. Here certainly, she would

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(*) It is remaskable how firmly the Jews cling to the belief that they are to return to Jerusalem and inhabit the very spots inhabited by their fathers. They keep the records of these places with great exactness; though these must be difficult to trace, Jerusalem having been destroyed and rebuilt, as it has.

It is said that only a few years since a Tribe was observed crossing the Desert. On being questioned the members of the Tribe said that they were of the Tribe of Gad. They knew nothing, of the crucifixion of Christ having dwelt long in Persia and had not even heard of it; their ancestors had no hand in it. Such a story appears highly incredible but we are assured that these people were apportioned tracts of land, without the city where they are now settled.

feel at this moment more than any, the loss of those saintly parents. When they died she did not grieve as others grieve, and she most certainly rejoiced with them when they ascended into Heaven with Our Lord. But we can miss those we love, even though we do not wish them back. She had lived to see almost all who were dear to her leave this world, she had seen her faithful partner, St. Joseph the next to follow St. Joachim and St. Anne but then Jesus was with her and as she knelt at the tomb of her parents (a spot still shown to pilgrims visiting Jerusalem) how she must have missed that mother to whom she owed so much.

Our object in these considerations is to show Our Lady not as an angel or seraph, but as a perfect human being fulfilling the law of God most perfectly. The law of God bids us honour our father and our mother and none ever fulfilled that command as Our Lady did. The love she bore to St. Anne and St. Joachim was the most perfect form of filial love that this earth has ever known, with the sole exception of that borne to herself and St. Joseph by her Divine Son, for it was not fitful or self-seeking or impatient, as our love so often is.

It was like leaving the Shrines of Saints to Our Lady who knew their holiness, and in bidding good bye to this holy spot, she felt it as we should feel it, but far more deeply.

St. John knew this and his loving heart felt for that fair one who was confided to him. He knew that he was but a stranger, that all who were nearest and dearest to her God had taken away. He knew that he himself was now giving her this extra pain, in leaving that holy land, for none have ever loved it as Mary did and now she had to leave it and leave with him.

The holy women probably accompanied them. It is generally supposed that St. Mary Magdalen did so. St. John in his sweet humility knew not how dear he was to our Lady. He was the beloved Disciple of Jesus; therefore he was the beloved son of Our Lady. Do we want to be the beloved of Our Lady. Let us see what it is that keeps us from being the dearly beloved children of her heart, and whatever it is we will struggle to overcome it during this month of May, no matter what it cost us the effort shall be made for love of Mary and in the power of Jesus. Though nature can do nothing apart from Him, with Him all things are possible.

« Through Christ our Lord » the Church continually prays. All we say, all we do, shall be said and done in Christ. We will practise our devotion to Our Lady in union with and through Jesus; and what graces will not follow! what holy reparation for sins against the Fourth Commandment! They are terrible in this age which seems to want no Law of God, but to have unbridled license to form arbitrary laws and to keep none.

We have seen in Our Lady's life how it breathes ever one atmosphere, the Will of God, no matter how it was manifested. She was His creature, His child. She must act in all the various occurrences of life as seeing in each, the marks of God's most Adorable Will.

XXXI.

The sacred letter of the B. V. M. to the people of Messina.

MARY VIRGIN, Daughter of Joachim, most lowly handmaid of God, Mother of Jesus Crucified, of the Tribe of Juda, of the Race of David, salutations to all the Messinese, and the Blessing of God the Father Almighty.

We learn by public instrument, that you all with great faith have sent to us Legates, and Ambassadors, and confessed that our Son generated by God, is God and Man, and that after His resurrection He ascended into Heaven, you having received the knowledge of the truth by means of the preaching of Paul, the elect Apostle.

For which thing we bless you, and your City, of which we wish to be perpetual Protectress.

From Jerusalem.

The pious tradition of the Sacred Letter, unbroken through so many ages is as follows:

We read in the History of the city of Messina, that St. Paul being in the city of Reggio in Calabria, teaching the Truths of the Christian Faith among the heathen of those regions, the people of Messina sent messengers begging him to repair to their City to preach to them also the Word of God. Arrived at Messina, the Apostle was re-received by the people witb great manifestations of joy, and, hearing the holy Truths of the Gospel, they received them with joy, abandoning the worship of idols, and embracing the Christian Faith. Then, hearing from the same Apostle of the marvellous beauty and holiness of the Virgin Mother of the God-Man, and that she was even then

living upon the earth, they felt their hearts inflamed with love, and determined to send Ambassadors, to Jerusalem to bear their greetings and salutations to the Mother of God; saying that they held her in veneration as the Mother of God and their Queen, and dedicated themselves to her service. The Legates in company with the Apostle arrived in Jerusalem and prostrated themselves at the feet of Mary, most Holy, to whom they offered the vows and offerings of the citizens. The most holy Virgin received them most lovingly, praised the readiness of their conversion, and then with her own most pure and holy hand wrote the Letter, the translation of which we have given above, and which is most jealously preserved as a lasting testimony of the love of Mary for her predelict city. The Messinese have ever preserved a most tender devotion to Our Lady; Her Image is adorned with gold and most costly gems, various Feasts are annually celebrated in her honour, with great splendour, and the citizens have the pious custom of venerating her every Saturday by the singing of devout Canticles and by musical melodies. And the Blessed Mother, faithful to her promises, has truly shown herself to be, in a very special way, the Protectress of these her devoted children; delivering them from imminent dangers, and pouring down upon them singular favours.

Tradition gives the names of the Ambassadors, Origgiano, Brizio, Bonafacite, and the Centurion, Mule, who returning from Jerusalem, consigned the Precious Document into the hands of Bacchilo, consecrated first Bishop of Messina by St. Paul himself.

We read in an ancient document that St. Paul translated the Letter of the B. V. M. from the original Hebrew into Greek, and that Lasckri translated it later into Latin.

Indulgences accorded by the sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX.

Whosoever visits the Cathedral Church of Messina, and assists at the Lauds sung there in honour of Mary, most Holy, gains 300 days' Indulgence.

Brief of Pius IX, April 21, 1870.

Whosoever, having confessed and comunicated, shall visit the said Church from the 1st. Vespers to the 2nd. on the Festival days of June 3rd. Aug. 15th. and Sept. the 8th. fulfilling the usual conditions, gains a Plenary Indulgence.

Brief of Pius IX, Sept. 23. 1870.

Pope Benedict XIII conceded an Indulgence of 100 days, once a day, to all who recite the Prayer known as the Responsory of the Sacred Letter.

This Indulgence was published March 8th, 1726.

Other notes regarding the sacred letter.

Fl. L. Dexter, in his Omnimodae historiae Chronicon says:

« At this time there was found in the Archives of Messina, a Letter written in Hebrew, directed by the Most Holy Virgin to the citizens of the same city, by whom it is preserved in great honour ».

To the testimony of Flavio Destro, quoted above, we may add that of the no less celebrated Orofone, a Greek writer of the time of Ruggiero, who in a work discovered by Cardinal Farnese, at St. Praxede, in Rome, writes with much exactness of detail on this same subject. Here

are his words « After the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul the Apostle, preaching in Reggio, and performing many prodigies, the Zanclei, called also Mamertini or Messinese, at the desire of their Chief sent messengers to Paul that he should come to them also: who coming, the Lord worked many wonders in this city of Zancle. Paul preached the holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and spoke also of Mary the Mother of God; and that people being converted sent messengers into Jerusalem; and the Holy Virgin sent a Letter to the Messinese, which Letter is written in Hebrew characters, on parchment; and the Messinese preserve it with jealous care ».

A modern writer adds further testimony, « Several codes in Arabic and Syriac may be adduced and are confirmed by illustrious Maronite writers, by the Patriarch of Antioch, by the Bishop of Marden, by another Antiochian Patriarch, by Assemanni, a noble Maronite deputed by Clement XI for the interpretation of Oriental languages; by Lucius Neri, Capitular and Apostolic Notary, by the Vicar General of Cyprus, Metoscita, by a Code of Canobius, and by other documents referred to by Menniti ».

Many other Authors, ancient and modern, treat of the Sacred Letter, amongst whom is Francesco Maurolico a famous scientist of the XV th. century; We will conclude with the words of the great Pontiff Benedict XIII th in his Sermoni Mariane: « We read of three Letters written by her; 1st. to St, Ignatius Martyr Patriarch of Antioch; (This letter is brief, strong, and sweet, like that sent to the Messinese). The 2nd. to the Messinese, which we have given above, and a 3rd to the Florentines, (this is very short and appears to have been rather an injunction than a letter in the sense of the other two).

Having gone over briefly the testimony of the Historical authorities nothing remains but to say a word regarding the attitude of the Sovreing Pontiffs, with respect to the tradition.

To begin with, we have the tacit consent with which-all the Popes, and the Bishops of Messina, for so many ages have respected the pious tradition, observing with great fervour the popular devotion to Our Lady of the Letter; in addition to this, Pope Paul Vth. by a Brief dated Jan. 15th, 1616. granted a Plenary Indulgence to all the Messinese who with due dispositions, should visit the shrine of Our Lady of THE SACRED LETTER on the 3rd. of June, the day on which the Feast is celebrated,

This Indulgence was confirmed by the holy Pontiffs Urban VIII with two Briefs dated 1626 and 1646, Innocent. Xth., Alexander VII., Clement. IX., Clement. X., Innocent XI., Innocent XII., Benedict XIII., and more recently, Pius IX.

SUPPLEMENT

TO

MAY PAPERS

"THE MODEL OF A CHILD OF MARY"

SUPPLEMENT

THE MODEL OF A CHILD OF MARY

Chapter I.

The Consecration.

The years since Our Lord had ascended into Heaven and left His Mother to be the Mother and consolation of His Infant Church had passed quietly and tranquilly as far as regarded Our Blessed Lady.

St James the Less, the kinsman of Our Lord ruled the episcopal See of Jerusalem; and from the Holy City the Apostles went forth on those missionary circuits, which must have been both like and unlike those of the Three years ministry. They no longer had their Master with them to share and encourage their labours; but they had long since learned to go to their Master's Mother, and Her sweet influence underlay all their works, like a hidden perfume. They taught others also to seek that humble dwelling, in the poorer part of the town, and to seek from the Mother of the Incarnate Wisdom, those wondrous lessons of sanctity that none could better teach them. The Church had increased rapidly, though persecution

was not lacking to try the Church, as yet it was not as violent as it was afterwards to be. The new Converts came to Our Mother for help and advice of all kind, both for things spiritual and temporal, and as the growing desire for holiness increased within some more favoured souls they came to Her, to learn how to satisfy it. Thus, we may imagine one day, as Our Lady sat alone in the little inner room of St John's House, which she called Hers, the curtain was gently lifted and someone entered and came softly to Our Lady's side.

« Lady, I want to be a Saint, » said a voice softly, timidly.

Our Lady turned and looked lovingly on the little figure beside Her, and the young girl continued, « I want, dear Lady, to be a Saint, and I feel something urging me to ask You to help, will you not tell me what to do? » « Did you ask the one who has charge of your soul? » « I told him I felt a desire to ask you, and he said that it was God himself, that had inspired me with that thought, and oh Lady, I would like to call you Mother, as I hear the Apostles; Mother, we hear them say, « we will send you to the Mother. They are the priests that Christ ordained should teach us, and they call you Mother, and therefore, may not we? »

The one who spoke was a child in face and almost a woman in years, a young convert much loved by all who knew her, for her piety and fervour.

Our Lady answered, « Call Me Mother, if thou wishest it, for such by the will of God I am ».

The little head drooped down upon Our Lady's breast where ever since so many souls, both Saints and sinners have found help and rest. As the royal Psalmist says »,

« How lovely are thy Tabernacles O Lord of Hosts !..... the sparrow hath found herself a house, and the turtle a nest for herself where she may lay her little ones : even Thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God » (Psalm ; LXXIII).

Was there ever a Tabernacle of God on on earth, like Mary Immaculate, the unspotted Ark of the Covenant of the New Law? Some such thought passed through the little one's mind as she nestled closer to Our Lady, and whispered « Mother of Jesus, be my Mother, and I will strive to follow faithfully all your counsels, and obey you in all things ».

Our Lady looked down on her with great love, Her thoughts had gone back to the days of the Holy Childhood; « Be a child, Ruth, this is the first step in holiness, if thou dost truly wish to become a Saint. Practise this, it is thy first lesson; my child, come to me, again and I will help thee. Until then continue to love the Child Jesus, and speak to Him quite simply. Obey thy parents and those who may be placed over you, in union with the obedience of the Holy Child, My Divine Son ; thus thou wilt indeed become in the sight of Heave one who truly loves and serves God above all things, and all else for His sake, and what is that but being a Saint, my little Ruth? »

The little arms were lifted to Our Lady as if to seek a caress and a blessing, which were not refused and the little one left the Mother's sweet presence, with a wondrous feeling of content in her heart.

We cannot realise how much we loved by our Lady, and we cannot fathom the joy of that Maternal Heart, as the little image of God claimed Her as Mother. Our

hearts alas are far too worldly, but it is good to think sometimes, dear children of Mary, of what you are in the sight of your heavenly Mother, and how She prizes you; and for Her sake respect and guard yourselves as belonging to Her more than to yourselves.

Some days passed, and then in the silence of the quiet house, a light footfall was heard, and Ruth, half shyly yet confidently, as one who is assured of her welcome, entered our Lady's little room.

« Is my Ruth any nearer being a Saint », asked Our Lady tenderly.

« I have been trying to keep closer to the Infant Jesus », replied the young girl, lifting her face to our Lady's embrace « and I am so happy. Everywhere I go, I think the Mother of Jesus is my Mother, and I must love Her as the Infant Jesus and oh, Mother », hesitatingly, « I wish I could live with you always, but I would be too happy », she added doubtfully, « and I should have nothing to pain me then ».

« Hast thou been suffering, my little one, since I saw thee last? » asked Our Lady, sweetly.

« Yes, I know not why, but my people seemed to repulse me and not to love me as before, and I cried bitterly; then I thought of what you had once told me of the Infant Jesus, and how no one would receive you and Him, and so I brought those who had wounded me some little gifts of fruit and flowers, for did not HE say « Return good for evil », and then I was so happy, and I could not understand why ».

« It was the joy of thine angel, rejoicing over thy soul », said Our Lady, smilingly.

« Then when I went to bed, I wanted to do some-

thing more to show my love for God, and so I arose from my couch, and lay for awhile on the hand ground, because the Infant Jesus had no bed, but I did not stay there long ».

« Why not » asked Our Lady.

« Because », and the little face coloured, « It seemed to me as if you would not wish it, and would tell me to return to my couch ».

« Thou didst do well, my child; for the gifts we offer to God of our sacrifices, are so precious for they are to be presented in the sight of the Most High, purified of all dross of self–will; therefore they must be performed under the guidance of obedience. Thou must ask the one who guides thy soul, and who baptized thee, ere thou dost perform any such acts of penance, and then when thou hast his sanction, the offerings thou dost make thy God will indeed be acceptable to Him, because self–will will not be found in them. We read in the Scriptures of old, how God rejected the sacrifices of those who offered their gifts in a spirit of self will, therefore my little one, « continued Our Lady, caressingly, stroking the little head must be quite free of self will, so that she may be very pleasing to the good God who loves her so, and be one of those of whom the Angels sang at the Birth of Jesus ».

« What did the Angels sing, » asked the young girl.

« They sang » Glory be to God on High, and on earth pace to men of GOOD-WILL'.

« Mother, my will will always be good, I feel sure of it, for I have united it to yours. You are my mother, and I am your child, and a child should always be one with its mother should it not? Oh Mother, how grateful

I am for that thought of coming to you, now when anything troubles me the thought of you will comfort me, and help me to bear my little troubles for God's sake. I used to fret when I was put on one side and treated as a child, because I was so small and weak, but now I shall say to myself in future, 'I am indeed a child, I am indeed the child of the Mother of Jesus' » ?

« So has the Most High decreed », said Our Lady, with one of those rapturous looks Her face sometimes wore when the « èlan » of her soul manifested itself ; « Thus as the Most High ordained that I should be the Mother of many childen. Thou art the first to come to me in this way, but many will follow thee to whom thou hast shown the way and future ages will know them as my own ; priests who bear the Holy name will unite them ; and I will protect them if they follow in my way, and keep my counsels ».

The little one listened rather awed, not so much by the words, as by the wondrous look on our Lady's Face.

« What more am I to do, Mother », she asked, timidly, « that I may be more pleasing to God ? more like your child ?

Our Lady answered, « Jesus said to those whom He had appointed to take His Place on earth'He that heareth you heareth Me', therefore as I have said thou must go to him who directs thy soul, and ask him to guide thee. Remain in thy moments of quiet like a child in its mother's arms, keeping in God's presence, thus thanking Him, for having created thee. When thou art with others, be humble, listen to what they say, be as a child the least and last, ever attentive to all, be very kind, eager

to perform every service possible, for love of God, doing to His creature as to Himself ».

« Since you accepted me as your child, Mother, whenever I am alone I try to think that I am by your side, and try to imagine what you would say to me; and now I love being alone, though once I did not like it at all. When I am in any sorrow or trouble, I kneel down as if I were here, beside you, and tell you all about it, and ask you to pray to God for me, and I really feel as though you were near me, « and the girl looked up enquiringly into our Lady's face.

« Dost thou not know, little one », answered Our Lady, « That God gives great power to a mother's prayer, therefore as I have adopted thee as my child I am bound to pray for thee, and watch over thee ».

« Will you then pray, Mother, that I may never be sent away from you? »

« That may not be God's will », said Our Lady, « He may wish to give thee that trial ».

« The thought of a possible separation so often comes to me, Mother, I put it away from me, for never in all my life have I been as happy as now when I can come here as often as I like to see you ».

« Just now thou didst say that thou wishest to have something more to do for God to give Him pleasure, so now when this thought comes to thee say, each time, 'Lord, not my will but Thine be done' ».

« How can I say this » the child asked simply, « I do not want this to happen ».

« Yes, but remember the prayer thy Master taught His people, « Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven? » In Heaven they know no other will but the will of God,

therefore are they in perfect peace. Those on earth have peace, whose wills are in harmony with the Will of God. I told thee the Angels sang on earth of peace to those of good-will. Therefore my little Ruth will often say « Thy Will be done on earth as it is Heaven », wilt thou not, my child ?

« I will » answered the girl, « But because you, Mother, have asked me to, for I cannot *feel* the words I say ».

« God does not ask impossibilities, little one, He asks only the use of the free-will He Himself has given us. He asks you to firmly desire to do what is His Blessed Will; and at the same time to trust that He will give thee grace to perform it, hard at times, though it may seem to be. It is a daily battle, little one, and all have to fight it, but it is a glorious fight, and the Angels rejoice as they look down upon the conquerors. Dost remamber those feasts and shows thou didist take part in, bofore thou wert a Christians ? »

« You mean the gladiators combats, in the theatre out (*) there, near Jericho, « said the girl », Ah yes, I remember them indeed but Peter the Apostle forbade me ever to go again to such sights. But they were exciting in a strange manner, I wonder how we could like such cruel sports, the gladiators fought as though they fought for an eternal Reward ».

« It is sad », said Our Lady, « but is it not sadder that those who know the Truth will not fight as bravely for it as those poor men do for a temporary recompense ? »

(*) Herod the Great introduced the sports and combats of the arena into Judea, and for that purpose biult large theatires and training schools outside Jerusalem, at Jericho, Sebaste, and Caesarea.

« Mother, they seemed so noble », said Ruth, timidly, « When I was at Caesarea, I remember how they passed and saluted saying « Those who are about to die salute thee », and I admired their bravery ».

« And so my child, do the Angels admire the brave soldier who fights to death, rather than give way to his enemy. Thus we may draw a good thought even from what is wrong, and learn that we must fight temptations fon God's sake, as bravely as those of the arena fight for renown or the love of gain, We may have, even to contradict and oppose those whom we love if it were God's will. So, my little one, thou hast to fight with this thought, which troubles thee. Thou must not dwele on it, but must quietly say « Fiat, Fiat! » so that thy will will harmonize with that of God. For awhile you will feel the inward disturbance, and then there will come a calm, and thou wilt be prepared for whatever God designs for thee. Now; go in peace my child, and God's blessing go with thee ».

Chapter II.

The Separation.

« What are those tears for, my child, what has happened? Nay, be comforted little one, and tell me what ails thee »; Our Lady's voice was sweet and tender, but sweeter still was the embrace in which She enfolded the weeping girl.

« It has come at last that which I have so long dreaded I have to leave Jerusalem, and you whom I love more than life itself ».

« And hast thou said thy Fiat for so long to now....»

But Ruth interrupted, « Mother, I have said it, nay I do sayit still, Fiat; « Fiat voluntas tua », but I cannot help the tears. If you had not prepared me, I might have rebelled but now I have come to ask your last blessing and counsel ».

« Nay, not the last », said Our Lady, « When dost thou leave ? » « I go tomorrow, with the caravan, and I know not when, if ever, I shall return ? My grandfather is dead, he was a wealthy merchant in Ephesus, and I am going to live with my Grandmother ».

« And art thou chosen », asked Our Lady, in preference to thine elder sistors ? »

« I think that is owing to you and to your teaching, Mother. They think that I will be kind and loving, for I have tried so hard to do all I could at home, and to see all around me as images of God ; andthis ».... with a smile through her tears « is my reward ».

Our Lady smiled, « Thou shall be rewarded in a way thou canst not know now. Now thou must prepare for thy journey by the Sacraments, it may be long ere thou canst receive them again. Go and ask for the Apostle John, and then I will bid thee farevell ».

Ruth quitted the room, and Our Lady looked after her with much love in her glance. Some time had elapsed since the day she had first come and begged the Mother of the Christ to be her mother also, and every day since then she had grown sweeter and more loveable. Now she was to leave the Mother of her adoption, and go out into the world.

Presently Our Lady arose, and went to a casket which contained some relics, Our Lady's treasures, and from it

She took a tiny piece of linen, which She placed in a little case or locket, and having kissed some of the relics, She returned to her place and continued Her work.

After a short time the girl re-entered the room.

« What a bright face my little Ruth has now », said Our Lady.

« Oh Mother, I have such a treasure. How good John the beloved has been to me : he told me not to show it to you, but you love to give pleasure to others , and I must tell you, though I will not show it to you. It is a painting that Luke the Physician thought he had spoiled and he gave it to the Apostle John, who gave it to me. How I shall look at it and think that you are near to love me ».

« I am glad, my child, that thou hast this joy, and thou wilt have a greater one. But, now thou art not going to a Christian house therefore thou wilt have to be firm in your duties, and then give way to thy grandmother in all that thou canst, if it does not interfere with thy conscience. She will expect much from thee and will be disedified , if she sees thee do now the same things that thou didst do before thou wert a Christian, and which then she would not have noticed? It is strange, those who have once heard of Christ, expect all His followers to be like Him, and are disedified if they are not so. Peter returning to Jerusalem recently said to me », Mother, the Christian should be another Christ, all expect it of us, may our Master's spirit ever live in us. « And now see the treasure I have for thee, my little one, look, this a piece of the linen that was wrapped round the Body of Christ. Thou wilt wear it with love for Him, and

thou wilt remember His love for thee, when He gave His life for thee ».

« Would that I too might give mine for Him », said the girl as she reverently kissed the relic, that Our Lady placed around her neck. Then Our Lady drew the little figure into her arms and folded her in a farewell embrace « May the peace and blessing of God go with thee always, my child, Procedamus in pace in nomine Domine. Remember thou art always mine » and so the child of Mary left her Immaculate Mother.

Our Lady prayed and offered the little soul to God, begging the Holy Angels to follow her on her long journey, and glad indeed were they to fufill her behests.

Is there anything in the simple scene we have portrayed that is at all contrary to what probably might take place in those early days of the Church, or opposed to what we curselves would have done had we lived in those favoured times. The simple tender devotion to Mary, what is it but the outcome of an earnest faith in the great mystery of the Incarnation? It is but natural to imagine the faithful of that epoch being as desirous as we would be now-a-days of possessing an image of Our Lady however defective, and we cannot imagine the strictest Protestant or most fanatical Puritan, who would not have have been glad and proud to receive even a tiny souvenir of the Life and Death of the Incarnate Word. Thus, our reverence for relics comes down to us from out of the earliest years of the Church of Christ, those first ages of Christianity, upon which so many sects outside the One True Church would fain make us believe they are modelled, but which, alas, they resemble neither in spirit or in practice.

May the tender Heart of Jesus touch these poor blinded, but wellmeaning souls with His sweet grace, that they may see the exceeding beauty of that Church, the spotless Bride of the Lamb of God.

Chapter III.

Ephesus.

The years had passed since the day we saw Our Lady bidding farewell to Her child Ruth, aud the violent storm of persecution had swept over the fair city of Jerusalem, and one of its chief victims had been St. James, brother of St. John. Violent hands had also been laid on the anointed person of the Vicar of Christ, who had been cast into prison. So St. John, fearing for the precious charge he had to guard, had left Jerusalem, and vith Our Lady, and those of her household who had wished to accompany them, had taken up their abode in Ephesus. Ephesus was then a flourishing city, the capital of Lydia, and built on a beautiful plain, near the mouth of the Port Panorum ; it was then famous for its beautiful Lydian dye, and like many a city of the time had modelled itself upon the Imperial City on Rome, possessing its Forum, amphitheatre, and Racecourse. Like Rome, too, it had other Gods than the God of the Christians, and its magnificent temple to its favourite deity, the « Diana of the Ephesians », was considered one of the wondens of the world. Here it is that we find Our Lady, in a house which St. John had hired, in a quiet portion of the town, sitting alone awaiting the return of St. John, who had

gone on one of his many errands of mercy. There was a sound of voices at the outer gate, and Her attendant entered to enquire if She would see a young woman who appeared very excited, and whom she could hardly keep from followig her.

« Oh, yes », answered Our Lady, « She may come in, of course ». Scarce a minute had elapsed, when a slight figure ran, not only into the room, but into Our Lady's arms.

« My Mother, Oh my Mother » Joy was in every gesture of the little thing, and Our Lady's face beamed with love as She bent over the childish form, and called her by her name « My little Ruth » « Ah, Mother, say my child ».

« My child », said Our Lady, tenderly, « Did I not tell thee thou wouldst have thy rewand. If thou hadst remained in Jerusalem, thou wouldst now be suffering from the pain of separation. God's Providence is over all things, would indeed that we trusted Him, more; but tell me how it has fared with thee since thou didst leave Jerusalem ».

The girl or rather woman seemed hardly less childish, in form and face than when she parted with Our Lady in Jerusalem, years ago. She took Our Lady's hand caressingly, and asked « Shall I begin from the beginning ? »

« Yes, my child, tell me all ».

« When I left you, Mother, I thought my heart would break, I pressed that sacred memento you gave, that had wrapped the Body of Jesus, to my heart, I could not put it to my lips, and it seemed to suit my feelings; my heart was so sore and sad. I am sure God must have

pitied me, Adam and Eve could scarcely have been more onely, I seemed in another world, Egyptian darkness was ll around me. Then after the long journey came the trange house and place, and the new life. All seemed o lonely, so very lonely. I felt more having been so appy, so blissfully happy since you let me become your hild. Time went on, and the same sorrowful lonely eeling remained until I heard one day, that you were in Ephesus, and had been for some time before I knew of t, but still for some while past I had experienced a joy of oul I had not known before, and I think it must have been my Angel ».

Ruth had talked quickly as if she could never tell er tale quick enough, and Our Lady listened, quietly nd simply, lovingly taking the girl's hand. Then she topped, and put her head down upon Our Lady's arms, emaining silent as the tears flowed down; presently she aid, « But there was one comfort, I had your picture », nd as if she had just thought of something, she added « I remember now that when I told you of my treasure, nd my delight in possessing it you said I should have a greater joy, and I did not then understand. You must have meant that I would meet you thus. And now that have found you again, will you not help me to be a saint to please God more ».

Then Our Lady made her sit down, and asked her, « Hast thou not seen God's ways in what has happened o thee? All holiness is in imitating Jesus. I offered you my child, to God, in union with the Infant Jesus, then Thou didst imitate Him in his Flight into Egypt, thou must therefore walk with Him from His Childhood, His Hidden Life, to His Public One.

Here thou needest to walk warily ; remembering that thou hast to reflect Jesus in words of love to all around, in humilty of act and deed, and I give thee the golden motto I have given to many « The Christian should be another Christ ». Then examine thyself on this, my child, and thou wilt soon see where thou hast been un-Christ-like in thought or word or deed »

The girl's lips moved in prayer as Our Lady spoke, and then she drew from the bosom of her robe the little case Our Lady had given her, still on the cord Our Lady had placed round her neck so long ago.

« How often, Mother », she said, « Have I kissed this, saying Jesus died for me, Jesus loves me ».

« And now, my child, add Jesus, my Love, Jesus », and Our Lady's voice lingered lovingly over the word, « Amor meus crucifixus est ».

The girl had fallen on knees, as Our Lady spoke, and was pressing her relic to her lips, when Our Lady looking up saw St. John standing, at the entrance to the room ; he had overheard the last words, and his eyes were filled with tears. « Welcome, my son, welcome », exclaimed Our Lady, « Were you successful in your quest ? »

The girl stood on one side as St. John approached, and he placed his hand in blessing on her head, without noticing who she was, as he answered Our Lady.

« Praised be to God, He blessed my endeavours beyond my hopes ».

« Do not tell me now, you are tired and need refreshment », said Our Lady, « Bless our young friend before she goes, and when you are rested, I anxiously await your story ».

St. John turned to the young girl, and then in surprise, exclaimed « You are Ruth! »

« Yes », Our Lady answered, « If you had not been so occupied, and had so many journies and neccessary business to perform, I would have asked you to seek for her, here in Ephesus. You will see her another time, for she will have much to tell you ».

St. John blessed the girl, and left them while Ruth prepared to depart, begging Our Lady, to tell St. John what a comfort the picture he had given her had been. Later on St. John came to tell Our Lady, as she desired the tale of his journey, and its result. Some years before St. John had converted a young man, who gave every promise of being of great use to the Church, St. John had left him in the change of the one who governed the church of Ephesus at that time. On his return to the city, with Our Lady, he went, as soon as it was possible to seek for his spiritual child; but the one to whom he had confided him, met him in great grief, and told the saint that the one he sought for was as one dead for he had become an out–law and the head of a band of robbers. Grieved as St. John was at this intelligence there was only one thing he could do, go himself to seek the unfortunate man, and try if his personal influence could bring him back again, so mounting a horse he rode out to the robbers camp beyond the gates. When he arrived there the chief, when he saw who it was who sought him, fled from him, in shame and remorse, but St. John, dismounting followed him, crying out « Why do you fly from me, my son am I not your father, and one who loves you tenderly? » till moved by St. John's tender words and gestures the wretched man came back to him, and fall-

ing on his knees besought God's pardon, and the Saint's forgiveness for his many crimes. Then, yielding to St. John's sollicitations he retired with him to Ephesus, where he was placed in the care of those, who would aid him to make amends for his past life.

This in brief was the story St. Iohn told Our Lady as they sat together, on the evening of the day little Ruth, had found her Mother, and in the hearts of both was that joy the Angels know, « over one sinner who doth penance ».

Chapter IV.

Her Illness

The days passed on, bright days for the happy Child of Mary who came and went as often as she liked, between the quiet dwelling of Our Lady, and her own home in the wealthier quarter of the town. She was ever welcome in the little household, and was quickly missed when two or three days elapsed without a visit from her. Then a messenger came to beseech Our Lady to come to visit the girl, for she was very sick. Accompanied by St. John Our Lady, speedily wended her way to the house where Ruth, lived with her grandmother. It was a large house, built in the Eastern fashion with inner courts and balconies, and furnished with every luxury and comfort of the time. As Our Lady crossed the inner court a venerable old lady came forward to meet her, and thanking her warmly for coming to see her, begged her to go to the upper room, where the sick girl lay.

Flushed, and with burning head she lay upon her couch, her bright eyes grew brighter as Our Lady entered. « My Mother how good of you to come to me! »

« Is it not a mother's place to be at the bed–side of her sick child? » Then placing her hand on the girl's head. She said, « Still walking with HIM, Ruth, thou hast now come to the crowning with thorns ».

« Mother, dear, you know everything. It was a help last night to bear the pain in my head by thinking of Him; and then my treasure », and she took up the little case that she wore on her breast. « I took out the piece of linen that touched the Body of Christ, I thought I might touch it. You would, I know tell me to do so, if you were present ».

« Jesus himself will come to thee my child, John will bring thy Lord to thee ».

« Mother, is it true, I scarce thought it possible in this house? »

« And why not, little one, it is only in our dwelling places that we may safely have the Holy Sacrifice, will it not therefore bring a blessing. Thou hast prayed for thy Grandmother, hast thou not? When He comes, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, who knows what grace may be bestowed upon her? We may indeed gladly echo His Words' This day is salvation come to this house' (Luke XIX, 9) ».

The little arms went up around Our Lady's neck, and the lips whispered « Mother, prepare me, I feel so unworthy ».

« That thought, my child shall be thy preparation, My God, I am not worthy. The Apostle John will come and cleanse thy soul by the absolution, he is in the house

and I will send him to thee, that the fever may not be increased by waiting, or any anxiety ».

Our Lady left the room, and sought St. John, who she found speaking with the grandmother, below, who was answering his questions regarding a physician.

« No », she said, « I did not like to cross her when she begged me not to ; ' Send for the Mother of Christ ', she said » But St John interrupted her as Our Lady entered, saying « This is the Mother of Christ. The old lady saw the sweet face of Our Lady looking lovingly upon her », From what we hear « she said « Christ must have been a great prophet and if so Lady, you are highly favoured by the Most High ». « May we ever esteem His benefits, and return Him thanks », said Our Lady, motioning to St John to go to the sick girl.

He left, and the old lady offering Our Lady a seat, spoke earnestly, for her heart was in her words, « Lady if you have any power use it for my little one; she has been an angel to me, she is an angel. When she came to me, in my grief I little thought she could fill the void in my heart, fot I knew her only as a child, and as she then seemed to me, a petted and spoilt child. She was so small and delicate that she was surrounded with every luxury to keep her life and I told my daughter often, that she was ruining her by so much care ; so that the change surprises me all the more. She tells me it is because she is a Christian, but who knows what to believe. The days are strange, when I was young, we knew nothing of all these sects and divisions, and the word ' Christian ', was unheard of ; all cannot be right « concluded the old lady, dubiously ».

Our Lady answered the first part of the speech, rather

than the last, « I also noticed the change in your granddaughter, and thank God for it. I well understand your sorrow at her illness; but we must hope that the good God will hear our prayers and spare the precious child; and may you both attain to Eternal Life ».

« I would not care how soon that might be, were I but prepared to meet my God, but these various doctrines going about have bewildered me, and what my little one would have told me I could not well understand ».

« We will at least pray together », said Our Lady, sweetly, and she recited the « Pater Noster » slowly. Might we not learn a lesson, when we are talking with some dear one whom we would lead into the shelter of the true Church, that prayer is as necessary as explanation, and is indeed a far more powerful weapon than controversy. Lead those whom you would instruct, to pray for light, or better still say with them some prayer that they know and have faith in, such as the « Our Father », and you will find your endeavours will be more richly rewarded, than many an eloquent and learned discourse.

« Thank you, Lady, that is indeed a homely prayer, I hope indeed I shall be delivered from the evil of losing my child », said the old woman, as Our Lady finished the prayer. « May the God who created you and her, leave you together on earth, for some time longer, « said Our Lady » ; But can we send you some one to remain to night with the sick one, some one who could look after her, and pray with her ? » « I fear indeed », answered the old lady, « I cannot lift her, or look after her, but I will pray with her and repeat often what I can remember of the prayer we have just said together, but anyone who you may send to us, Lady, will be welcome.

Our Lady opened a little packet, and drew from it a piece of parchment, on which was written the « Our Father », which she gave to the Grandmother.

« Thank you, Lady, thank you, may the hours fly quickly, till I see you again ».

She opened the outer gate, and accompanied by St. John, Our Lady passed out into the streets of Ephesus, busy with the ceaseless traffic of a flourishing mercantile town, while above them loomed high the dome of the great temple of Diana, whose worship was so soon to give place to that of the true God.

In the meantime, when left to herself the grandmother having watched their departing figures, slowly mounted the stairs leading to the upper story, and entered the room where the sick girl lay. She stopped on the threshold and looked to see if the invalid slept, and then remained, without moving less she should make a sound. « My little angel », she murmured, for the girl lay asleep, one hand holding the little picture, and the other the case at her neck. The old woman hesitated, there seemed something in the air which both awed and soothed her; she looked round but there was only the sweet face on the pillow, which in itself was a lovely sight, for innocence and holiness were depicted there.

« My little treasure », said the old woman, again, « I wonder not that God wants you in Heaven, but He will listen to my prayer », und then bethinking herself of the parchment Our Lady had given her, she went up to the couch, and began to read it and forgetting herself, she commenced to recite it out loud, though in a low tone, and with a very pleading accent, « Our Father who art in Heaven », Ruth, aroused from her sleep, heard

with surprise the words in her grandmother's voice, but did not move or interrupt, as the old lady, went through the prayer, « Hallowed be thy name, the Kingdom come, Thy Will be done–but give me my darling », she interposed, looking towards the bed, and then stopped ».

« Grandmother, where did you get that prayer ? »

But the old lady continued to the end, and having finished sat down, and answered, « The Lady who has just now left, gave it to me, my treasure, and I am praying to her God and your God, to leave me my heart's joy ».

Ruth put down the picture she held, and took her grandparent's hand in hers, and the latter picking up the picture, looked at it, with some surprise. « It is a painting of the Lady, where did you get it ? »

« I brought it from Jerusalem, John, the Apostle, seeing in what grief I was at leaving, gave it to me, but I did not show it to you as I did not think you would be interested in it ».

The old woman kissed it and murmured too herself, « I wonder if he would give me one ! »

The girl heard her, but gave no answer, for she was weary and closing her eyes, lay back against her pillows, her face still flushed with the fever.

The grandmother still holding the picture, commenced to pray « O God, creating what is good and true, grant my petition, and save my treasure, look upon the work of Thy hands, and for her sake take pity on my loneliness, and leave me my little love, she is to me as the pulse of my heart.

She came to me, in Thy name, may she live for Thy Glory and my comfort. Amen, Amen ! »

Having thus prayed she seemed comforted and sat quietly, watching her child. So the time passed, the old lady seemed as though mystified at something, over which she was pondering when a light tap was heard, and one of the holy women, who had accompanied Our Lady to Ephesus, entered softly. Without allowing the old lady to rise, she approached her gently, and said « One of your attendants bade me seek you here, she feared you might have need of rest and refreshment? »

« Are you the one whom the good Lady said she would send to aid us? »

« Yes, I am Noemi, one who came with her from Jerusalem, and happy to be allowed to do what my Lord bids all do, for He said, « As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me! »; and He said also « I was sick and you visited Me! »

« Your Lord? » said the woman, « Is that the Christ you speak of, you Christians talk as if Christ was still alive and as if you spoke with Him every day ».

Noemi coloured, and said « You are not a Christian then, I did not know ».

« I like to hear you talk though, and especially did I like to hear the Lady, who was here today, speak. Indeed, if I only saw her, it would be enough, even if she did not speak ». Then as they looked towards the couch they saw the girl had roused and was listening to them. « I am so happy you also love the Mother, she is more than a Mother, to me. I do not mind being sick since it has brought Her here and you have seen and loved Her ».

« She is coming tomorrow early, « said Noemi »; John, the Apostle, told me, he comes to offer the Holy

Sacrifice, and administer the Sacraments to you. The Mother said she was sure your grandmother would not object ».

« Do as you like, do as you like, all in my house is at your service, for you are friends of God », « Friends of God » she repeated, as she bent to embrace her child, who whispered. « Will you come tomrrow, and be present at the Sacred Mysteries, even though you do not understand them, I would like you to be present ».

« Surely, I will do anything that will please you my little one », so saying she left them together. Ruth, then whispered her joy and gratitude at having Noemi with her for the night, who answered tenderly ». Have I also not a great joy, I am to prepare for the coming of Our Lord, tomorrow? But first is there naught I can do for you?

« No » said the young girl, « Since the Apostle John was here, this morning all my restlessness is gone, and I have slept, I require nothing ».

« But you are flushed », said Noemi, « and I am sure your head aches ».

« It is true » said the girl, « But there has been a great peace, since the Mother of Christ, my Mother, was here and placed her hand upon my head, bidding me think of the crown of thorns. So long as God gives me the grace to bear it I would prefer not to be without it ».

Noemi, with deft and gentle fingers went about her service of love, preparing all for the Holy Sacrifice to-morrow. At Ruth's request a little table was brought from an adjoining room, « It is one I used to work on, and it will ever be a treasure to me if it is used for so holy a purpose »; she explained, and then watching the pre-

parations asked « What is that little vial of oil, that you have placed there, for? »

Noemi replied, « Just as in Baptism, water is the external sign of the great work of cleansing wrought within, so oil is the outward sign of the Sacrament of Healing, which the Mother says you will also receive tomorrow. Indeed I envy you for tomorrow your soul will be white as driven snow, and the Sacrament will cleanse every corner ».

« How beautiful » said the girl, « and then Jesus will come to my soul after I have already received it? »

« I do not know whether it will take place before or after the Holy Sacrifice ». But seeing the wistful look on the sick one's face ». We will ask the Apostle, when he comes ».

« How good you are to me », answered the girl.

« Nay », replied Noemi, « Do not say that; I love to do what the good God would do. He loves to give joy. All joy is from Him ».

« O He has given me more joy in my sickness than I could have dreamed of. I have hopes now of my grandmother's becoming a Christian, I was told not to speak to her about it, and now I am glad I did not do so, as now she sees the Faith visibly and so beautifully exemplified before her ».

« She saw it in you, my child », said Noemi, « your example prepared the way for your dear one, and we cannot doubt, but that she will become a Christian. You will sleep now, will you not? Let your head rest on your pillow as on the Breast of God, and sleep as an infant «.

The girl smiled her thanks, and strove to obey, while

Noemi with much love completed her task. When all was arranged she went to the side of the sleeping girl, and seeing something slipping from her hand, replaced it. and in doing so saw it was the cherished picture of Our Lady. « What a favoured child she is! We, who live with the Mother, have not such a treasure as this », and she sat, looking at the picture, and wishing she could copy it. Presently the girl stirred, and her hand moved as if seeking for her treasure, which Noemi placed within her reach, saying, Here it is, dear I have your picture »; but as Ruth did not sleep again, she asked, « It is so lovely, where did you get it? »

« From the Apostle John, before leaving Jerusalem; he gave it to me to console in the midst of my grief at leaving the Mother, and indeed all my friends, to whom I was bound in the Precious Blood, we had all received together; he gave to me as a great treasure, which indeed it has been to me, this little picture which Luke the Physician thought he hadspoiled ».

« It was Luke then who painted it, I wonder would he do one for me ».

Then as the sick girl looked round she saw the altar and all things ready for the Sacrifice, her eyes brightened, as she asked eagerly », Is it nearly time, is he coming now? »

« I hardly knew at what time to expect them, but all is ready ».

« You will not forget to call my grandmother, in time for the Sacrifice, when Jesus comes on the altar, He will surely bless her, and give her the light of faith ».

Noemi promised, and went downstairs, and passing through the courtyard and vestibule, softly undid the fa-

stenings of the outer gate. The hour was yet very early, and the moon was shining brightly, reflected back from many a marble roof and shining dome. Afar off, in the still street Noemi perceived two figures and instinctively recognised them. In haste as she was to summon the domestics of the house, and arouse their mistress, she paused as if fascinated to watch the two approaching. Our Lady had been out very little in Ephesus, less so even than in Jerusalem, where she was so well known. They moved slowly, St. John with his treasure, his whole attitude that of one who has a greath responsibility.

The charge of royalty would be a light one, compared to his, that of the Mother of God. It was the sense of this that never left him night and, day, but more especially in the streets ; he hardly liked the crowds to come too near her, She was, indeed to him, the Living Tabernacle of God, in whom His Master, the Immense God, Wisdom Incarnate, the Great Creator, had dwelt, and therefore this fair one chosen to so high a destiny, deserved all that passed her should salute her.

In the meantime Noemi, having gazed her fill, at the approaching figures, hastened to summon the attendants, bidding them inform their mistress that the guests were arriving, earlier than was expected, and having seen all was prepared in the sick room, hastened back to greet Our Lady, and St. John, who just entered.

« You are early » she said, reverently, kissing Our Lady's hand, « But all is ready ». Then as she knelt for St. John's blessing, asked « Ruth is anxious to be anointed before the Holy Sacrifice, if you do not mind ; she so wishes to be pure as she says as the driven snow, before she receives Our Lord ».

« Poor little one » said St. John », May that little virgin soul ever be a sanctuary in Jesus will dwell, « then turning to Our Lady », shall we go up to her, she confessed yesterday, and there is no need to be alone ».

They entered the sick girl's room, and the little arms were held out to ask Our Lady's embrace, who folded Her to Her loving Maternal Heart, the room was bright with the light of the lamps, and all being ready St. John prepared to administer the Extreme Unction, having said some prayers, he brought the Sacred Oils to the bedside, and Our Lady did her Mothers part as she held out the little hands for the anointing.

We could dwell on such a scene as this, looking with love, and longing, longing that other eyes might see what, thank God we, of the household of the faith, see so plainly, Our Lady's place in the Redemption, the beauty of Her Office, the magnificence of Her power. Magnificence! Yes, She has indeed received great gifts from God, to enable Her to perform Her part as the Mother of Christians, magnificently and well.

The Immaculate Mother of the God-Man has become Mother of thousands of his ransomed creatures, whom the Almighty Creator has entrusted to her care.

Chapter V.

The Conversion.

In the meantime Ruth's grand mother, who was a little disturbed by having to rise so much earlier than was her wont, entered the sick room, as St. John finished repeating

with her child, a form of profession of faith, something after the manner of the Apostles's creed of our own times. All her irritability vanished as she watched the scene, so very strange to her. It was to Our Lady her eyes most often turned, though she let no detail of the function escape her. St. John had approached the little altar, and had begun the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the old lady tried to follow the various prayers and psalms; presently a silence fell, and there was a movement at the Altar, Our Lady and Noemi bowed low, and she instinctively did the same. What was it that brought tears to her eyes, she knew not, but she remained bowed. There was a presence in the room, that she could not doubt: but what did it all mean? She hardly let her mind wander, but she felt an outsider, and wished she belonged to this little band of believers, though she, as yet, hardly knew what they believed. Then she saw St. John turn and approach her child, the little one raised her head, with a look of unearthly love and joy on her face, while in her heart the grandmother kept repeating « My Angel treasure, my comfort, May the Most High be praised for your happiness! »

Soon all was over, and St. John knelt for a short time in prayer, and the old lady, remembering her duty as hostess, left the room, to see that some refreshment might be prepared; St. John seeing Our Lady about to minister a restorative to the sick girl also left the room, and sought the old grandmother below, the latter was in some distress that the repast was not yet prepared, but St. John, soon put her at her ease on that point, and they entered into conversation regarding « the fair flower', as she called her grandchild, to whom he had ministered.

« Sir, she said », I do not understand your ministry, but there are many things I would like to understand. This morning, my treasure », and the old lady wiped away a few tears, « repeated with you a form of belief in Jesus Christ, the Messiah. In my young days I studied history but heard of no such thing regarding Christ, as you spoke of, from all accounts he was an imposter ». Then, seeing the pain in St. John's face at this word, she added quickly, « Forgive me, Sir, I did not mean to pain you, but I speak openly ».

« I beg of you to do so », said St. John.

« But », urged the old lady, « You seemed pained ».

« If we love one deeply », said St. John, kindly, « we feel pain when we hear a word of disparagement said against them, but I know you desire to hear the truth ». « I do indeed desire to hear the truth about so vexed a mystery as the history of Christ appears to be. If the Christ, the Nazarene was a man, mighty in word and work, if he was King of the Jews, why was he crucified? Why those terrible tortures we heard about in these parts, my very blood ran cold as I heard of those cruelties ».

Again St. John's face changed, and « What, and what to those who witnessed them? he asked.

« Sir », said the old lady, « Did youw itness that which we scarce believed to be true ».

« I did, and what you heard was not half the truth. Never, never in the history of the world was such barbarous treatment used. My Master, oh my Master! » and the tears flowed down his cheeks.

« Forgive me » cried the old woman quite touched, « Oh forgive me I would not pain any one willigly, and one so good as you ».

« It is not altogether pain, I rejoice also that my beloved Master will suffer no more; death can have no more dominion over HIM ».

« But why, why was it? » persisted the old lady, « and you also called Him the son of God, I cannot understand it ».

« It is a long story » said St. John.

« Nay, if it tires or tries you too much I can wait another time ».

« No; it is always better to use the present moment ».

Then St. John commenced to tell the tale that has been so oft told and retold in the many centuries that have rolled over this little orb, told in so many different languages, in so many different ways, affecting souls so variously, and evoking from human hearts a music, which is ever delightful to the Eternal Father.

St. John's few questions elicited that the old lady had studied many doctrines and dipped into many philosophies in her time, but she was without any real faith, except a vague one in an Unknown God. The history of the Fall she readily accepted « for », as she said, « I felt the world is not as it came from its Creator's hands, it must then have been fresh and fragrant; the infants' came from their mother's wombs unstained, and only as they grew up ».

St. John interrupted her, « This is not so, no souls come into the world now with the innocence of an unfallen world? It is only in Heaven that we shall see that ».

« How can I go to heaven unless I know what I am to do to reach Heaven ».

« Wisely and well said; You have indeed echoed the thought of Eternal Wisdom, who has given this world a Teacher, with a Divine Mission, His Church ».

Then St. John proceeded with his explanations, until they were interrupted by an attendant bearing a tray, and the old lady then thoughtfully withdrew.

In the sick girl's apartment above Our Lady still sat by Ruth's couch who still lay in a kind of semi-slumber but when she opened her eyes she saw Our Lady still sitting beside her, who said « Jesus has been good to my child ».

« Mother, my soul seemed to dissolve into His, my life to mingle with His, and yet I am still in this world, and not yet indissolubly united with Him. Will you ask Him to take me to Himself whom I love more than life ».

Our Lady answered « Thou must not forgest thy motto, Ruth ».

« Fiat Ecce » said the girl, and then St. John's voice was heard asking admittance. The girl looked up earnestly as he entered, and asked « Was my grandmother impressed; tell me, may my hopes be realised ».

« I have every hope that they will ».

« God be praised » said the girl as she closed her eyes, and her lips moved in thankful prayer.

Taking Our Lady a little apart St. John told Her, of his conversation, with the mistress of the house, how it been interrupted, and how he was at present expected elsewhere.

« I think » said Our Lady, « It would be best to finish your work with this dear soul, we will ask Noemi to explain your absence ».

Then as St. John passed the couch he blessed the sick girl, saying « I think she will live, Mother ».

« For God's glory », answered Our Lady, « she has more to do on earth, ere she goes to Heaven, to be a perfect flower for Jesus ».

St. John looked at the perfect Flower, the Immaculate One before him, and restrained the words that would have risen to his lips, for he would not wound Her humilty; « She is the child of your heart, Mother », was all he said, « Praises to God for His graces to her ».

As he descended the stairs he repeated the Angel's salutation « Hail full of grace, blessed art thou amongst women ». Those wondrous words of salutation might not be used by the faithful, while she lived, who was so full of grace, but when She had passed from earth to Heaven, the pent up love of faithful hearts could no longer be restrained and Apostles and people took up the sweet refrain, « AVE! AVE Maria! » Doubtless, to St. John those words were sweeter and dearer than to any other, he may indeed be the first to have used them, but without doubt they were very dear to all the members of that Infant Church who had seen and known the Mother of Christ, even as they are to us today, we who, happily live in that Barque of Peter, which grows ever more beautiful and glorious, the new Ark, which saves the ship-wrecked souls of earth. Let us ever increase in reverence and love for the glorious Church Christ founded; it is beautiful on earth, but what will its loveliness be in Heaven? Beyond the power of mortal mind to imagine or describe. Let us then do our part bravely on earth in the Church Militant, that we may have our share too in the glory of the Church Triumphant.

We left St. John descending the stairs, he found his hostess awaiting him, « Do you want me » he asked, kindly.

« I do, Sir, what you told me this morning was very beautiful, but I knew most of it, before. What I

wish to know, is Who is Jesus Christ? Why was He crucified? I want to hear his history, it fascinates me, and yet the little I have heard, seems a constant contradiction. He was crucified and yet he who condemned him, wrote on his cross that he was a King; who are his subjects? »

« I rejoice at being one » said St. John, He Who was the Word of God, Who was Truth Incarnate said « My Kingdom is not of this world ».

Then St. John set forth briefly and clearly the History of Our Lord, and the chief articles of belief of the Church He had founded.

« We fight », the Apostle continued, « for the Kingdom of Heaven and we do not value the things of tkis world, except in so far as they help us to serve Our Leader, our Lord, our Life, our Love ».

The old lady looked keenly at St. John, « You love Him, Sir, devotedly, as I love my treasure above ».

« I love Him more than my Life » answered St. John.

« And yet, you see Him not, He has gone from you? »

« Would you love your little one less, if she was taken from you, which we are hoping and praying, may not be? She has joined His service, she is a faithful servant of the King of Kings ».

« You call Him King of Kings, can all then belong to His service? »

« All, all He excludes none, for He died for all ».

« Then cried the old lady », I too will belong to Him, I believe all you have told me of Christ and His teaching, and I wish to become the subject of that King, who rules by love. When can I be admitted into His service? Ah me! if I had only known Him in my youth, of what use

can I now be, but I will do whatever He requires me to do ».

« Come », said St. John, gently, « come and give joy to your child? »

Ruth seemed better and brighter, and when they entered she held out her arms to her grand mother saying, « I am so happy! »

« And so I am, also, my treasure, I, too have learnt to know and love Christ, and desire to be received into His service ». Our Lady who had still been sitting with the sick girl, arose, and going apart with St. John, he related to Her the morning's occurrences, and both agreed it would be better to hasten the old lady's reception into the Church, as soon as she was prepared.

Our Lady then returned to the group at the bed, and in her tender way told them, that the Baptism would take place as soon as it was possible. « But », She added gently to the grandmother, « there are somethings you must be told and some questions to answer before the ceremony can take place, and as John the Beloved desires to give your little one the pleasure of being present whon you are made a Christian (he is ever like His Master, seeking to give joy to all around), it is well she should be a little stronger before the ceremony takes place, for it will be to her », and She looked down at Ruth's face, who smiled acquiesence, « the happiest day of her life after her own reception ».

The preparation for the Sacrament of Baptism would be in substance much the same as now, and the old lady's straightforward earnestness made her preparation very easy. So the great day speedly arrived, and St. John told her

he was going to admit her into the one true fold, of which there is but One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism.

But there were other preparations for the stately old lady to make, for having it in her mind that she was to become the servant of the King of Kings, she thought it only right to don her richest robe and costliest jewels, and there was a great search throughout the house for some things that she wished burnt, for they savoured of the old days of paganism and disbelief. Then when all was in readiness, and she entered her grandchild's room she said « I will not kiss thee again, till I am a Christian, and we are members of one body in Christ as the holy man has explained to me ».

The child said nothing, but her heart was too full of joy as she saw the reverential attitude, with which the old lady sat awaiting that moment which was to work so great a transformation in her soul. The early Christians may have understood better than we do the greatness of that Sacrament, which works such wonders in the soul, but we should strive to realise it and thank God for His wondrous goodness in making us members of His mystical Body, and renewing in our souls that Image of God, defaced by sin.

And now came the moment so desired, when the great Creator drew His ransomed creature to Himself, washing that soul from sin, in that marvellous Sacrament of mercy.

Can we not picture that scene to ourselves: The Mother of Jesus offering this soul to be purified, washed in the Precious Blood, the water is poured and the words pronounced, and Mary has another child. She remembers no more the anguish on Calvary's heights, for joy of this fresh gain to God. The Angels sing anew their oft repeated

Canticle of praise, while the fair little flower in the sickbed, thanks God, without words for His wondrous mercies to her and hers. She beckoned to Our Lady, who bent over her as she whispered « I cannot thank God, Mother, will you not praise Him for me. John the Beloved told me how you praised God in a beautiful Canticle, and said he would one day give it to me. I want to join your praise, now, that God may know how grateful I am, but I have no words in which to tell Him ».

« My little one » said Our Lady, tenderly, « Thou dost praise Him without words, and two things hast thou done, which have brought His blessing upon you and yours. Thou hast suffered and hast praised God, in thy sufferings, and so He has given thee thy heart's desire. We will now quietly tell God we want to thank Him, and He will accept our desires ».

Our Lady took the child's hand, and they remained quietly, in this peace and joy which is indeed a renewal of the peace and joy of the unfallen world. St. John had already quitted the apartment, and the old lady remained bowed down in prayer, such as she had never known before. After a while she drew forth the piece of parchment on which was inscribed the « Our Father », which she slowly repeated, and then came quietly to the bedside, and in tones of rapture that might have been those of the holy woman, Anna, whose name she had taken, greeted her grandchild, thus: « May the day be blessed, child of God, that first saw you enter my house, and may I never cease to praise the Most High, who thus favoured me. I watched and saw that the Christian was another being from those with whom I hitherto lived, and now my troubled soul, that for years has been disturbed, is now

at peace, such peace that I dreamed not was possible on this earth ».

Ruth had listened, not wishing to interrupt her, but now she said quietly, « It is the Mother of Christ that has brought you this grace! »

« My lips could never utter HER praise worthily » said the old woman, but here Our Lady stopped her, saying gently, « I will leave you now with your grandchild, but will return, if possible tomorrow, for I have those at home, who expect me « and having bid both Farewell, She left them to themselves.

Rut took up the conversation, « In truth, Grandmother, you said aright, no human lips can worthily speak the praises of the Mother of Jesus, but God sent His Archangel from Heaven to salute Her, on His part ».

« And what did he say? » asked the grandmother, « I would like to greet Her in the same words when newt I see Her ».

« Nay, I will readily tell you the words of the Angel, but John the Beloved has told me that she would not like us to use them now, but when God takes Her to Himself, then all the members of His Church will love to repeat in Her Honour those words with which the Angel first saluted Her ». Then the girl repeated the words of that Angelical Salutation, and tears glistened in the old lady's eyes as she heard for the first time, those sweet words, which until the end of time rise from earth to Heaven in loving greeting to Christ's Immaculate Mother.

It is both sad and strange that those outside the Church should refuse to use the words the Angel used when He came on his embassy from Heaven; stranger still is it that they should be so deluded as to think they can better

please God by refusing to honour His Mother. What would we think of the man who considered himself honoured because those around ignored and insulted his mother? We should consider him little short of a monster, how then dare they think they please God, by refusing to honour His Mother? The Holy Spirit tells us that he who honoureth his mother, is as one who layeth up a treasure, and in this virtue, as in all else Jesus Christ is our highest Examplar.

Let us return now to that sick room, where God had worked such wonders of grace; it seemed to have become a very Sanctuary, and Anna, as we will now call the newly baptised, felt disinclined to leave it. Presently her maid entered to enquire if her mistress would come and take some refreshment and repose. At another time the old lady would have refused sharply, if she did not want to do what she was asked, but now she answered, gently, checking the harsh response which her grandchild, knew she was wont to give, and which let her see the influence of grace, already at work, « As you think best, but I want nothing ». She arose, and turned with a sweet smile to the attendant, and the wish rose up in the old lady's heart that all around her might receive the same great grace, which she herself enjoyed.

Grace was, indeed, soon at work in the soul of the newly baptized, aiding her to cross her own will, to bend it to the will of another, and then filling her with that Apostolic zeal, which made her desire most earnestly that all of her household might share the same favours as herself.

Chapter VI.

The Vocation.

We find Ruth, the Child of Mary, again at Our Ladys' feet, older grown and more womanly, but sweeter and more loving than before.

« A thought so often comes to me, Mother, nay, do smile if I tell you, foolish as it may seem », and as Our Lady looked her agreement of the compact, the girl continued « It is this, I feel such an earnest desire to be a martyr, to give my life for Christ », and Ruth looked into the Mother's face to try and read its expression. The sweet eyes of the Virgin-Mother were bent on the girl more earnestly, as She answered, « For this have I striven to lead thee along the path, first trod by Jesus, and thou hast followed, little one. Why should thou not be a martyr? Jesus was the victim for all, why should not those who love Him strive to live in union with Him, in spirit and in truth. When didst thou first feel this desire? »

« When I was sick and grandmother was baptised, and I knew not what I could do to show my gratitude to God ».

« My little one, thou canst indeed be Jesu's little victim, thou canst offer thy life. consecrate it entirely to God, and give thy blood as did the martyrs, though thou mayst not be called on to shed it as they did. Many there are who will join the Martyr Band, in Heaven, who have not shed their blood. When all the thoughts, words, and works are impregnated with spirit of sacrifice then the searcher of hearts the Good Just God, accepts the intention, the desire to offer one's life, to give one's blood,

in imitation of and in union the great Victim, the King of Martyrs, the God-Man, Jesus ».

Ruth looked up with wonder at Our Lady, for the tone seemed as one inspired, different to the usual quiet manner in which Our Lady ordinarily spoke, and Our Lady answered the look, « God's Spirit is speaking to thee, my child, thou shalt become His little Martyr-Bride, whether thou dost shed thy blood for Him, as some of our brethren have done, or whether thou dost simply offer its every pulsation to be spent for Him. God will accept thy wish, it is indeed He, Who has first given it to thee. Then John the Beloved will consecrate thee, and also give to thy beloved grandmother the grace of dedicating to God the remainder of her days, even as did that holy woman whose name she bears. These are blessing which make the soul grow brighter in God's sight, and they give great grace and also great glory to God. Thus, my little one, as thou hast passed through the Infancy and Childhood of Jesus, thou hast also felt the faintest of shadows of that sorrow of soul, as thou didst go about the duties so lonely and in a strange land; yes, indeed, my child, thou hast tried to walk in the steps of Iesus, going about every where doing good, this I have heard from many a one, my Ruth, and therefore Our Lord hath favoured thee still more, trusting thee with His Cross, and thou hast followed Him, now it is reserved to thee, to be consecrated, bound to that Cross, upon which the Lamb of God offered Himself, for the salvation of souls, so dearly cherished by Him. This oblation is to the Most High as a a martyr dom, you givest thyself, thy life, thy whole love to Jesus, thou canst give no more ».

« Mother, Mother, when can I make this act? »

« Not yet, my child, Thou hast to walk to Calvary, ere this grace will be accorded to thee; but I will speak to Johu the Beloved, and he shall decide when this great act is to be when this solemn consecration of thyself in union with Jesus on Calvary shall take place ».

« He has told me » said Ruth, musingly, « How wonderful it all seems ».

« What has he told thee, little one of Iesus! » the girl looked up at Our Lady, rather timorously, hardly liking to repeat what St. Iohn had told her.

« Jesus said dying; he told me Jesu's words when dying, and how He looked at him and said », Behold thy Mother. « When I am consecrated a victim on Calvary, then Mother, you will be more my Mother, than ever. This I feel, and it makes me long more than ever for the day when I shall be really your Own ».

« I too, shall look forward to the day when my little one, first being betrothed to Jesus, will become His Little Bride and be bound to Him, for ever ».

« Mother, may I not promise now, to belong wholly to Jesus, will you not offer me as the Betrothen of God? »

« My child, go and commence to act in closest union with God, as one who hopes to be bound to Him, entirely, as one who could give her heart to no other than to the God-Man ; one who has been chosen by God to lives so on earth, that in Heaven she may follow the Lamb, whither so ever He goeth. Think as thou walkest the streets, my child, think when thou art at work as when thou dost pray, that Jesus is speaking to thee, I have chosen Thee ».

« Mother, how happy you have made me: if Jesus has chosen me to be His, it is because I am your child. There

is nothing in me, that could induce Him to grant me this great sign of predilection; but I will indeed strive to correspond with His grace, and not disappoint my God ».

Chapter VII.

The Veneration of the Cross.

The grandmother of Ruth, whom we must now call Anna, did not at all share her grandchild's reticence regarding her Faith. She had been, in the old days, imbued with the teachings of a certain school of philosophers, and held in abbhorrence any kind of human respect. She gloried in being a Christian, and would have scorned to fear or seem to fear to show that she was one. She teased the gentle St. John, continually, for some emblem, badge, or sign, which would outwardly denote that she was a Christian, till St. John had recourse to Our Blessed Lady.

« What can I give Anna », he asked one day, « to satisfy her desire to wear some outward token, to show she is a Christian? »

Our Lady answered him thoughtfully, « Yes, my son », I think I can give her something that will satisfy her, and from under her veil she brought a little bag, which she opened and produced two small pieces of wood in the form of a Cross, with a nail, partly driven through.

« What it it », asked St. John, in wonder.

Our Lady answered by relating one of those tales of the Sacred Infancy, that the Apostles loved above all things else to hear.

« One day » said Our Lady, « I entered the workshop, at Nazareth and found my Holy Child with these two pieces of wood and a little hammer in his hand. When He heard me enter, He quickly dropped the hammer and ran to me, and put His little hand in mine almost as if to lead me away. But, later, I returned, and took up the little cross, and have worn it ever since ».

« Shall we ever know all you have suffered, Mother », said St. John, partly to himself. Our Lady did not heed, but continued, « Give this to good Anna, and tell her, that her desire to make herself known as a Christian is so pleasing that God has ordained that in reward of her frankness and love of the Faith, she shall be one of the first to honour the sign of the cross that has brought salvation to the world ».

Without doubt St. John would have liked to keep so precious a relic as that himself, but he answered « I will take it to her at once, it will give her such pleasure ».

« My son is ever ready to do that, I know, to Christ's flock », said Our Lady, looking fondly at him.

When St. John entered the old lady's presence, he said kindly, « Peace be with you, Anna, see I bring you joy. Look what Christ's Mother has sent you. But first I must tell you its history ». Int tender words he related the history of the little cross, and how Our Lady had found the Holy Child with it; « He took her hand », said St. John, « as though she was to lead him, as all children were led; but in reality it was He Who led her. Then the Mother came back and took up the little cross, and wore it ever since. « St. John's eyes were moist as he finished the simple recital, and the old lady, looking up asked » Did she know the fature?

« Most possibly », answered St. John, « she was well read in the Scriptures, and in so many of the Prophets is it declared most plainly the sufferings and death on Christ. There can be little or ne doubt that She knew the future of Her son ».

« Poor Mother, poor Mother », said Anna, « No wonder that he tried to save Her, and has she really sent this cross, that the Boy Christ made, to me? How best can I honour it? »

The question was quickly answered in her own mind, and ringing a small handbell by her side, an attendant entered, to whom she said, « Go to my grandchild, and bid her come to me quickly, and bring me my casket of jewels ».

St. John watched her, admiring the work wrought by the Holy Spirit, in this naturally fine character; her absence of human respect, her zeal, her quick decision and promptitude of action, all the fine points of her disposition were brought out, in God's service, and all she had, the best of everything was laid at Christ's Feet.

He listened to her orders which she gave to Ruth, who had speedily obeyed the summons, « Go » she, said, « and bring me the richest and most appropriately coloured silk I have in the house, and cut it up to make a covering for this precious cross », and so eager was she that she would not wait even to tell her grandchild of how she came by it, or its history. Ruth hastened on her errand, and the maid entered quickly with the caskef of jewels. It was a pretty sight to see St. John looking over the rings and chains, with Anna, and saying which he liked the most, and then Ruth returned with a piece of rich crimson silk », Cover it, « said the old lady, Cover

my treasure, but leave me one piece of wood, upon which I can press my lips ».

Ruth set to work, and St. John lifted from the glittering mass in the casket, a beautiful long chain, « Shall we hang the cross, on this? » he asked.

« Yes », answered Anna « But it must be doubled, for I would have the badge of my King to rest on my breast ».

« In that case » said St. John « had we not better choose a lighter chain? »

« If I feel the weight » answered Anna, « It will remind me of the weight of the Cross on His shoulders, as He walked to Calvary ».

St. John was much affected, he laid down the jewels, and walked over to the old lady's chair; « May the Most holy and undivided Trinity bless you and yours, and the Holy Spirit increase you in all holiness, favoured of God! », and he placed his hands in blessing on her head.

« Now I must go », he continued, « The next time I see you you will have on the insignia of your Faith ».

« Nay » she pleaded, « but will you not put it on me, you, who represent my Lord and King? »

St. John looked round and saw that Ruth had nearly finished her task, and was now embroidering it with the jewels, which was a work (since she had been with her grandmother) she often had to do, as it was a pastime the ladies of that time often employed themselves with, and were very proficient in. St. John, in a low tone said, « Take the cross to your grandmother, with that large pearl, she may like to take part in the adorning of the cross she is so anxious to honour ».

Ruth obeyed, and with trembling fingers and great

reverence, the old lady completed the adornment of her precious cross; then looking around for her grandchild's aid, she said « I must kneel and ask the Holy Angels to rejoice with me, as I receive this Cross as a sign that I am a Christian, and a servant of the King of Kings, and that from the Cross came my salvation ». St. John placed the chain upon her neck, blessing her as he did so, while the old lady clasped the jewelled Cross in her hands, her lips moving in heart–felt prayer.

« Anna », he said, « this is a holy thought, direct from the Holy Spirit, and well have you done to follow it; numbers are there who will come after you and count the Cross their supremest treasure ».

Hitherto Ruth had not heard the history of the Cross: « It is not » she said, « It cannot be a piece of the one on which Christ died? »

« Ah no » replied St. John, a little sadly, « that we cannot have at present; the Mount is too closely watched, and it is buried deep. But, fear not, those will come who will bring to light this great Treasure of the Church of Christ, the Cross upon which Our Master, our loved Lord died, and it will be honoured by all the world: but this one His Hands have touched, nay have fashioned it ». And again he told the little history and then turned to bid farewell to Anna, but her hands were clasped, her eyes closed in earnest ptayer, and he forbore to rouse her, and turned away with a silent blessing.

Ruth accompanied him to the atrium or hall, and St. John said « Tell your grandmother, I would not disturb her prayer, but I go to tell the Mother, of how she apprected the gift of the Cross? Devotion to the Cross is to adorn Christ's Church, she is one but not the only

one whom the Holy Spirit has inspired to foster this devotion, so pleasing to the Most High. Death on the Cross has ever been the most despicable and degrading of punishments, but henceforth, and for future ages the Crucified God, will be on the lips, in the mind of all who are led into the Church of Christ, which is His Mystical Body ».

The girl knelt and looked up beseechingly at St. John as she said « Has the Mother told you? »

« Told me what, my child », he asked enquiringly.

« Has She told you », said Ruth, timidly, « That Christ has chosen me for Himself, and that you would consecrate me to Him. She bid me prepare, and to constantly remember in all I did the words of Jesus, when he said « I have chosen you! »

That is a vocation, « said St. John », and gladly, my child, will I, when the day comes, consecrate you as a Virgin of Christ ».

« I am preparing » said Ruth, having once broken the ice, she could speak more easily, « Will you not help me? »

« My child », said St. John, kindly, « The mission intrusted us by our Master, is not merely to convert sinners, to bring the wandering sheep into the fold; we have to attract into the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit, those souls who are prepared to receive the Divine Inspiration. Our Master desires to find flowers in His garden, and it is the duty of the gardener to foster them. Come to me, when you will, and I gladly help prepare you for the espousals with the Lamb of God, that you may indeed become a chaste Spouse of Christ ».

Another blessing and he was gone, but she remained,

repeating his last words, « Spouse of Christ! » Then bethinking of Our Lady's injunction, never to neglect the slightest duty she remembered that her grandmother might be in need of her assistance, and went to the apartment in which she had left her. It had grown dark, but a ray of bright moonlight, fell athwart the room, and lit up old lady's face, and the jewelled cross, that glittered on her breast; by it Ruth saw she was asleep, and knelt down quietly by her side, with a whispered invocation to the Angel Guardians, whom Our Lady had taught her long ago, to honour.

« Wonderful are the ways of God », she said, « My Angel help me to thank my Creator: Jesus, Saviour and Lover of souls, what can I do to show my love and gratitude to thee? »

She looked on the venerable face beside her, and remembered the weary period of anxiety she had gone through, how she had so often, longed to speak about Christianity, only Sr. John had warned her, not to preach by words, but to let her example speak for her.

Dear reader, is not this a thought worth laying to heart, win your friends by your example before you speak to them, for many resent interference in this hidden sanctuary of their hearts, just as we who let a friend wander at will through our house, would resent the intrusion of a stranger; but no one can resent or resist the subtle influence of good example, which does more than aught else to win souls to God.

As Ruth sat in the shadowy room, watching her grandmother, Our Lady's words of how she had followed Jesus came back to her mind. How had she followed Him? A retrospect of the latter years of her life, since

she had known Our Lady cam e before her. The joy of childhood returned to her, after the Mother of Jesus had taken her for her Child; the quiet home life imitating Jesus in His eary years; then the bitter parting, the lonely journey; the foreign land, the joy of finding Our Lady again; her sickness and suffering, all followed, one after another, and upon each phase of her life, she saw, as it were, written in luminous letters, God's love for her, and from her heart she thanked Him. Then her thoughts went to this trophy of the Passion of Christ, at her side, with her wondrous faith, (as instanced by the honour she hastened to give the Cross), this was the Prize of Jesus, prize redeemed by His Precious Blood, and then herself, little atom though she was, had been told Jesus had chosen sen her, told by lips that she could not doubt. What wonders in her short life, it was as if she lived in a different world. It was growing late, but in the street without, was heard the rumble of chariots and other heavy vehicles, while voices sounded distinct in the clear air, still she heard them not, she was in the world which this one does but veil. Both worlds were beautiful to her, the one she lived in, was a marvel of mysteries beyond her comprehension, and yet she comprehended enough to adore the Creator of the world, as being beyond all things adorable, loveable and desirable.

Presently the old lady stirred and dim as the light was she saw her feeling for the little cross and putting it to her lips. Ruth went silently away to fetch her some refreshment, as she came back she heard her saying to herself, « Cross of Christ, guard and protect me and mine »; and then raising her eyes she saw her loved grandchild bending over her. « My treasure », she said

tenderly, « Praise God with and for me; for this gift of Christ's Mother! »

« She knew who would value it, dear », answered the girl, « Perhaps you are the first so to honour the sign of our redemption. How we would value the Cross upon which Christ died! If we could but have a part of it! I am a long way from Calvary, now, but I feel as if I could scrape away the earth the Blood of Jesus fell upon, and under which the Cross of Christ lies hid ».

« And the Mother of Christ stood watching », murmured the old lady, « The Mother of Christ watched it all, and we can scarce bear to think of the nails, that pierced the Hands and Feet of the Redeemer, and fastened them to the wood of the Cross, I could not bear to see you, my bird, thus treated; what must the Mother have suffered! »

Ruth saw the flush on the wrinkled cheek, and saw too, that Anna was overtired, and said, « It is late, and you are very tired, I will summon Prisca, for it is time you sought your couch ». Tenderly she aided her to rise, and led her to her own apartment, and then when the attendant had left her, she returned to say « Good night ».

« Grandmother », she said as she embraced her, « you do not know how I love you! »

« My treasure, you have loved me ever since I have become a Christian? »

« Oh, no, always, ever since I came to you, and oh so much against my will, but it is different now. There seemed such a barrier then ».

« You did not want to come to me, my little one? »

« Ah how could I want to leave Jerusalem, the Mother

the Apostles, and all that I loved? But how glad I am now that I came; here I have received such grace ».

« Yes », answered Anna. « Yes, though it has been through sacrifice and suffering. You have been as an angel to me. God sent you, my little one, and I thank Him for his goodness ».

The old lady's head sank back into her pillows, and Ruth crept, away softly to her own apartment, but turning back to take another look, she saw, dim though the light was, her grandmother pressing the cross to her lips, and left with a happy heart.

How beautiful life, even in its smallest details is, when love and the sense of duty are the motives for its actions; and what a sanctuary a good Christian home is! Much has been written and said of the beauty of the lives of those who have consecrated themselves to the service of God, and his creatures, and rightly so. Their lives are indeed beautiful, fo they are animated by charity, love, but should those other lovely lives be forgotten, the lives of those who, though in the world, are not of it. They are indeed fit themes for many a spiritual writer, for from them God receives much glory.

May those holy households be iucreased, in which God manifests Himself in power and in peace, aud thus indeed will the prayer of our hearts be answered, « Thy Kingdom Come! »

Chapter VIII.

The Virgin of Christ.

« Mother, I have a great joy. I have news to tell you. To-morrow, I am to be consecrated to God, as one of Christ's Virgins. Is it not good news ; my Mother? »

Ruth, with face alight with joy, threw herself on her knees by Our Lady's side, and repeated, « Oh! How can I thank you my Mother, for helping me, for leading me to this? »

Our Lady's eyes and voice were full of tender love, as she took the little hands in Hers, and made answer, sweetly, « Thy joy is also mine, little one, I have expected this and have prepared for thee the veil that betokens thy Consecration, by vow of virginity to God ».

« And my Grandmother is also so happy, for John the Apostle has promised to come and offer the Holy Sacrifice, in our house, and nothing could make her more happy. I must return to her, and speedily, but You will be with me in the morning, Mother? »

« Assuredly, I will, my child, and Noemi shall come to thee, later, bringing the veil, and she will aid in any preparations for the great event, tomorrow, God's blessing and His Peace go with thee now ».

Though, as we know well the Ritual of the Church, the ceremonies and functions of Mass and the various Offices have gradually developed into their present beautiful form, nevertheless their origin can be traced back to the days of the Catacombs, and to the Apostolic times preceding them. As time passed on they gradually formed into what the Protestant historian, Lord Macaulay,

referring to the ceremonies of Holy Week, called « the most august ceremonial known amongst men ».

The « Consecration of Virgins » was always, from the earliest days, one of the Church's most beautiful and impressive ceremonies, and therefore we should not find it difficult to picture to ourselves St. John as he consecrates Ruth, the child of Mary, to God.

Noemi, that same evening, went to the house of Anna, as Our Lady had promised, taking with her the precious veil, that Our Lady had prepared for Ruth, and told her she would prepare for the Holy Sacrifice, and the ceremony of the morrow.

Ruth answered, « Grandmother has set aside a large room, which she has never used she became a widow, and has had it cleared of most of the furniture, so we can arrange it as you think best. She is so delighted, as she says, that the great Guest, the King of Kings, is coming to honour her house, by His visit ».

« She has indeed the right spirit of faith », said Noemi, « and God surely loves her very dearly. But will you let me see the room you speak of, and we can decide what changes, if any, we need make ».

Ruth led the way to a large apartment, richly adorned, and having a large recess or alcove at one end.

« That », said Noemi, pointing to the recess « Will do for us to retire to receive the Sacrament of Purification, or you may wish to speak to the Apostle? »

« I saw him to day, but I have no doubt, but that my Grandmother will gladly avail herself of the opportunity of receiving Absolution, she so values every grace », answered Ruth.

« There are plenty of lamps and candlebra, so we

can have all prepared before the morning » so saying Noemi laid aside the little veil, and the requirements for the August Sacrifice, which she had also brought with her. As she was doing this she said to Ruth, « All this must seem very different to Jerusalem, to you? »

« Nay », said Ruth, « I do not now miss Jerusalem; I have here all I can ask, I can desire no more, and to-morrow will complete my happiness ».

The few preparations were soon completed and Noemi was about to depart, when the attendant entered, and said there was one without who wished to speak with Ruth; and Noemi withdrew as Mary of Magdala, who was waiting to accompany her home, and had been speaking with Anna, entered. « Can I speak with thee? » she asked half timidly, and then drawing the girl to her self, she exclaimed, « Happy one, who art to be consecrated one of Christ's Virgins. I have brought thee a little present ». She produced a little box, very sweetly scented, in it were some pieces of linen.

« I used these » said Mary Magdalen, softly, « when I poured the ointment on your Love. It has been a treasure to me ever since; but thou art a favoured child of our Mother, and art to be consecrated to Christ, so, box and all as I used it, so I give it to thee ».

The sweet scent still clung to it, a fragrant remembrance of the day when » the house was filled with the odour of the ointment » (John XII, 3): but Ruth who knew not the history, as she took the gift, said « Happy indeed are you, who were thus able to honour your Lord; would that it had been me! How I shall value your present, more than gold or precious stones. Oh! you were favoured! »

« I am » answered St. Mary Magdalen, humbly, « but do not wish to be me, for I have sinned deeply ».

The girl interrupted her, saying, « I feel you are greatly loved by Jesus, I cannot think otherwise, you make me think of Him, and I feel as though He was very near, and you have been so near Him ».

« My tears have washed His Feet, and with this hair I wiped them ».

« It is no wonder », cried Ruth « That you carry grace with you », and she put her arms around St. Mary Magdalen, and kissed her, and kissed her hair also.

Then the latter said, « I will now return to thy grandmother, she begged me to return, as she had somewhat to say to me ».

She left the room and Noemi reentered, Ruth turned to her eagerly, « Noemi, see what has been given me, I have had such a joy ». And she showed the little box and told her what it was, and who had given it to her, adding, « There is one thing more I would love to have, some of the hair of Mary of Magdala, that wiped the Feet of my Jesus ».

« Surely », said Noemi, « You shall have that also, and she will never know I have obtained it. I will ask the Mother, and she can easily procure it for me ».

Then having taken a parting look, to assure herself that all was ready for the morrow, she bid Ruth farewell and departed.

Let us try and picture to ourselves that scene on the following morning. We see the beautiful room transformed into a chapel, and as such it was always after kept; there is our dear Mother Mary, with a happy little soul at her side, She has taken her hand to lead her to the

altar; near by is the holy old grandmother, the women of Our Lady's household, and humbly in the back ground, kneels St. Mary Magdalen, till Our Lady signs to her to come near to Her, and she kneels behind Our Lady and Ruth.

St. John having knelt in prayer for a few moments, turned and blessing the assembly, addresses Ruth: « Favoured Child of God, chosen from among many to fulfill the better part, having received the white robe, which betokens that the innocence, lost by our first parents, was restored to your soul by the grace of Baptism, thus renewing in it the Image of your Creator, another dignity now awaits you.

« Christ, our Lord, the second person of the ever-Blessed Trinity, having descended on earth and become Man, has chosen for Himself certain souls, who will reflect the Image of His Father, more resplendently than others. Folded in the arms of the Incarnate Word, my child, He will breathe upon you, and you will live according to the Spirit of God, not that of the world. You will fulfill His words, you will learn of Him, to be meek and humble of heart, and thus will you, walking in the steps of Christ Our Lord, on earth, follow Him in that grand procession of Virgins, who glorious and brilliant, with lilies in their hands, will follow Him, forever, wheresoever He goeth, in Heaven.

« This part you have chosen and no one can take it from you, God's delight is to be with those who are wholly consecrated to His service, whose souls being washed in the Blood of the Lamb, reflect the beauty and form part of the glory of the Sacred Humanity in Heaven. Beloved one, now to be united in time, and for eternity,

to the God, from whom you came, I promise you, that having left all things to follow Him you shall reign, forever with Him in Heaven ».

Then turning to bless the white veil, St. John gave it to Our Lady, who placed it on Ruth's head, saying « Philothea », and St. Mary Magdalen gently raised the veil and pressed it to her lips. St. John continued: « You will now assist at the Holy Sacrifice, in a new position in God's Church, as a consecrated Virgin of Christ, in union with Him offered to the Most High as a Victim. The whole court of Heaven witnesses your consecration, and rejoices with you. Angels and Saints praise God, and rejoice with a great joy. We on earth unite our joy to theirs and offer you to God, a flower of the Passion of Christ ».

Then taking a candle from the altar he gave it to her saying, « See, that thou keep alight the love of God, in thy heart, and now the Sacrifice will be offered, and you will unite your intentions to the Lamb of God offered to reddem mankind. All your heart, your soul, your whole being is His: never must you make rapine in your holocaust, but keep your intention pure, your sacrifice complete.
« Be as the light that you hold in your hand; in the world but not of it. No matter where you are the world and its way will not touch you as the darkness cannot touch the light.

« May the Benediction of the Father, Son, and holy Ghost descend upon you ».

Having blessed her, he turned to the altar and commenced the Mass, and as the moment of the consecration drew near the old grandmother, was helped to go upon her knees, a subdued sob came from her, it was a sigh

of gratitude, it was joy beyond control; and at the moment of Communion, she knelt beside her grandchild.

To our Lady, first, came St. John with the Infant Jesus, Our Lady's arms were folded again on her breast as at the « Ecce Ancilla Domini »; Ruth's head drooped like a little bird, as for the first time, she welcomed Jesus, to her soul as her own Spouse. The old grandmother, with head erect, made, as it were, a renewal of her oath of fidelity to Christ her King. It was her devotion, the way the Holy Spirit had led her, she was the subject of the great King.

They were indeed fair trophies of the Passion, that little group, gathered around the altar. There was Mary Immaculate, ever preserved from the touch of sin, by the forseen merits of Him, whose Mother she was to be. She, alone of all the human race, had not fallen into the quagmire of sin; She had been preserved stainless, that the Blood in her veins from which one day the Precious Blood of Jesus was to be formed might ever be free from contamination.

Then there was St. John, the Priest of the Most High God, possessing a power that Angels do not possess, bringing God, upon earth again, by his word; there was also the little victim, the little sacrifice mingled with the pure oblation, continually offered by the Lamb of God. There was St. Mary Magdalen the type and model of redeemed souls; we have all sinned, we all need Redemption; and the Immaculate Conception, and the Penitent Magdalen are both beautiful works of God.

May we, as we look upon this scene of purity and love, be filled with desire for what is pure and noble. Let us strive to keep in a pure atmosphere of thought and

mind. We carry that atmosphere whereever we go and others breath it and are invigorated and refreshed. There are some unhappy souls who carry a bad atmosphere around them which affects and injures other souls, May these little sketches be some aid, however small, helping us to keep ourselves pure, unspotted from the world, just as in the simple illustration of the candle; may we keep the light of love, burning brightly in our hearts, so that no darkness can affect it. Let us follow in the steps of those who have fought the good fight, with sin and self; who have gained the battle and are conquerors. To conquer oneself is a greater work than to conquer the world.

The combat is not over for us, yet, the Angels call us, and we must not be cowardly, we must not draw back. Heaven is the prize, and Jesus' hand will be laid in Benediction on our heads. Will not that reward us for even a thousand years of trial and temptations of all kinds. Will not the sweet smile of our Lady be joined to the rewarding words of Jesus, and together with the sight of the Angels and Saints and our own loved ones who have gone before us, form part of that Reward exceeding great. How we shall love to see those who on earth, had suffered so, now overflowing with peace and joy, inundated with ecstatic bliss!

Ah! it is well to think of these things, sometimes, during the dark days, that come to all on earth. God is the giver of all peace, joy and rest, all that we desire God loves to give us. We do not always see this, because we do not always know what is good for us, or see that God chastens those whom He loves.

The little ceremony had been over, and St. John had conducted his Mother home, and begged her to rest. So

we find Her now, sitting quietly alone in the little room from which she could see the beautiful sky, and waving trees. She always loved to watch the beauties of nature. and she glorified God by Her joy in this world. God intended us to appreciate and enjoy the loveliness of this fair earth, that He had prepared for us with so much love. Our Lady had allowed herself the repose of quiet communion with God, when a light tap at the outer door, called her back to earth again. Yet the interruption did not disturb her communion with God, nothing on earth could do that, or withdraw her from His Divine Presence. It merely elicited from her a fresh act of love of God, as She turned to salute any wayfarer who might come to her.

It was Ruth who entered now, radiant yet, quietly happy. « My little Philothea » said Our Lady, calling her by the name she had received when the veil was put on her head.

« My Mother » murmured the girl, « Mother, how do you live? Today the joys of Heaven are poured out on me what must it be to you? »

« I rejoice in thy joy, my child, but though to day thou dost feel as if thou wert in Paradise, yet it will not always be so. Dark hours must come, and then say », My joy is to do the will of Him who made me, Whose I am. « Say often these words, the Will of God is the melody of earth, may my will ever harmonise with His. My little Philothea is not yet a martyr, but, by God's grace, she has made a good foundation ».

« I know not how to look forward, Mother, I want no more in this life ».

« But, God wants more of my child » said Our Lady,

Thou hast to seek after justice and pursue it. It is on tis foundation, thou hast now to commence the work of ıy perfection. Thou must live for God only, not for ıyself. Thou must work to restore in thy soul His Image, efaced by sin. Thou livest to add to the beauty of the ›ul, given by the Precious Blood of thy Lord. Thou must ve a life of self sacrifice, of entire abnegation, which will ake thee a whole burnt offering, a living sacrifice to God, martyr, since thy life is His, and thou canst say, « I ve now not I, but Christ liveth in me ».

Chapter IX.

The Death.

There is another scene in the Child of Mary's life which e may look on; it is the scene of death. Death which ould be welcomed by Christian hearts, as the portal of ife Eternal.

Philothea, who had been frail and delicate all her life, id suddenly broken a bloodvessel and Death was declared ıminent.

To which of the actors in that sad scene shall we look st? We see the old grandmother, true to her character, m in her allegiance to her King, though almost speechless her grief, with her set white face and sorrowfilled eyes rned on the waxen face of her grandchild. At the foot the little couch kneels St. John, he has been summoned suddenly to anoint her, and had just finished doing ; his kind heart is suffering for the poor old Anna, in r speechless grief, but he could only place his hand in

blessing on her head and whisper « Thy Will be done », to which the holy soul replied « Thy Will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven ».

Philothea looked up wistfully as if seeking something, « My treasure », asked the grandmother, « Can I give you anything? »

St. John bends down to catch the faint whisper, which the old lady would scarcely hear.

« Is She not coming? » asked Philothea, « I want her ». No need to ask who it was the dying Child of Mary sought, and St. John, almost more moved than the venerable old Anna, answered, « She will not be long, you will live to see her, my child ». He remained by her praying and occasionally blessing her, when there was a slight movement in the quiet room, and Our Lady comes swiftly and silently to the head of the bed, motionong to the grandmother not to move. She bends over Her child, whose white face flushes with joy, « My Mother » she says, but no more, for St. John has forbidden her to speak, lest hemmorrhage should return. Our Lady took the little white hand in hers, and whispered, « My little martyr child, Jesus' little lamb, blessed and favoured art thou, my little one; blessed forever, chosen out of thousands on earth to be the Spouse of Christ, forever. I will offer thee again, my child, and thou wilt join in spirit, « and Our Lady knelt down, holding the tiny hands in hers, as she turned to the grandmother, and told her with what intention She was praying, and asked her », You give your treasure to God, do you not, willingly, and you join with Me, in asking God to bless and purify still more the Sacrifice, the Death so precious to Him, since it is the price of the Precious Blood of His Son ».

The old lady's eyes moved towards Heaven, and the ips, repeated lhe words, « Pater Noster, qui es in coelis, anctificetur nomen tuum, fiat voluntas tua, sicut in coelo t in terra » ; and the sick one looked at her grandmother, vith a smile like that of an Angel, and whispered « Thanks e to God, I am so happy ; grandmother, you give me o him, Who is my Love ; Come Lord Jesus, come ! »

The evening darkened and grew into night, the night vaned, and still the little one lingered on. In the early tours of the morning St. John entered the room, and the ick girl looked up longingly, « Father, will you give me esus ? »

St. John hesitated, and looked around, but Our Lady nswered, gently, « We will prepare, Jesus would give her l last embrace on earth ».

St. Mary Magdalen, who always kept in the background, ow entered the room, and quickly prepared a little altar, nd all that might be required for the Holy Sacrifice, which St. John commenced at once.

Anna seemed filled with preternatural strength as she ollowed, with deepest reverence, the Adorable Sacrifice. The solemn moment arrives, those tremendous words are pronounced, « Hic est enim corpus Meum ! » Miraculous words, which in all ages lift souls, to the unseen world, niting God's Church on earth with the Triumphant Churh, n Heaven, and eliciting the heartfelt love and adoration of thousands and thousands of ransomed souls. Then the Sacred Chalice is raised, between Heaven and earth, and here arises from humble hearts, the prayer, « Father look upon us, and deal with us, according to Thy Mercy, for he sake of Jesus Thy Son Our Lord ».

Jesus comes in Communion, to His Own, again, to

that Sanctuary of Sanctuaries, His Mother's soul, which He never leaves, She recives His renewed embrace; His other self, His Priest, His Beloved Disciple, is again pressed close to His Sacred Heart, and its pulsations echo in St. John's. Then Jesus takes His little victim in His arms, and breathes His spirit into her, giving her strength and fortitude; He tells her He will not leave her, He will be her Viaticum, the « food for the journey » that dark lonely journey from Death to Life. To the venerable Anna He comes as her King, and she bows her soul before him, and her « Domine non sum dignus » is a cry of truth, an expression of a humble heart most dear to God, as she renews her allegiance to Her King. The holy women present receive their Divine Guest, with love and gratitude, inspired by the Holy Ghost, and Jesus shows all how truly His « delights are to be with children of men ».

There is joy in the sicñ-room, joy but also exceeding pain. The Mass is over, but the last agony of the sufferer commences, that agony which is unlike any other. The Birth and Death of the fallen race of man, take place in anguish and agony; anguish to the mother, at the birth of the child; agony to her offspring at its death.

« Ah Jesus, help those in their agony », let that be a daily prayer, for those who are going through that awful struggle, that the living cannot realise.

St John, looking up from his prayer, saw the little ones' last struggle had begun; he had hoped she would be spared, so frail so sweet a flower. His face showed the pain he felt, and Our Lady, as ever « the Valiant-woman » was moved with pity for him, for the dying one, and for tue old grandmother; but she knew St John

probably realised, as the latter did not, what the fragile form in the bed was enduring.

We have often pondered over the dread mystery of Death, that agony which is unlike all other pain, the sunderance of soul and body. We see the struggle come and go in the suffering face, wave after ware of pain seems to sweep over tbe dying form, carrying with it some portion of the life that seems so strong within the weak frame, and struggles so hard to the end.

Ah! we may well believe that the act of dying conceals many a throe of direst pain, which the watchers at the bedside do not as much as suspect, and that the agony which dislodges soul from body is unlike aught else in kind and degree.

Our Lady drew Her suffering child into Her arms, and pillowed her head upon her breast, « The Bridegroom is coming for His little martyr Bride ». What a smile was that, that touched the parched white lips? It was ineffably sweet, as if the reflection of an Angel's. The Beatific Vision had not yet dawned upon her, but it almost seemed as if the dying eyes had caught some of the splendour.

« Mother, she panted, « Mother give me to Jesus! »

Without a word Our Lady holds as if offering her, and St John's voice sounds grand and clear, sublimely the priest, « Go forth, O Christian soul! »

« Jesus, my Own », murmured the little one, Our Lady's arm still supports her, and she whispers, « Philothea, thou hast echoed His words, He calls thee to come; « My Own », His Voice calls thee, my little one « Veni ». St John comes nearer, and lays his hand in a last blessing on her head, above, the Angels chant their glad songs of triumph, « Veni Sponsa Christi ! »

St Mary Magdalen supports the poor old grandmother, who looks anxiously for some recognition, and is not disappointed, for the sweet eyes turn, to her, with a look so full of love, and the weak voice sounds for the last time, « Grannie, Pater noster ; » the dying eyes seem to thank all in the room, rest on st John. and finally, with a last look of love on Our Lady, as the pure soul takes its flight to the Bosom of God. Seeing the life had passed, St John's voice sounded again « Jesus Corona Virginum », he was following the soul to Heaven; the grandmother's voice falters as she tries to continue her favourite prayer », « Fiat voluntas tua », it was pitiful to see the effort she made to be brave and finish the prayer ; if she ever did so, only God knew ; for Our Lady came to her side, and said, « At the death of one whom He loved. Jesus wept »; and then weary, worn in soul and body, rhe Spartan character broke down. With her head resting on Our Lady's shoulder, the tears fell down like rain occasionaly Our Lady would speak a little word encouraging the tears to fall, and relieve the over-charged heart, and bid her look at the calm sweet face on the bed.

Ah Mother, did you not think of that other white. Face, and when you held the dying girl in your arms were not your thoughts with the One, whose agony you could not assuage? As you wiped the sweat from the brow, of that child, whom you had led to God, so sweetly on earth, did it not solace your grief to think that you could do to Christ's Image, what you couid not do for Jesus in His Agony?

Children of Mary I you who are Her very Own and who desire to walk the Path She trod, keep ever close,

to her, follow Her faithfully, for if you walk with Her in life, She, with great joy, will be present with you in the dread hour of Death.

St John and the Holy women recited the psalms and prayers in low tone, as Our Lady, softey consoled the old grandmother, « Would you not rest now », asked Our Lady, gently, « You shall be summoned in time to perform the last solemn duties to your loved one? « Anna looked from the fair whtie face on the bed to Our Lady, and answered « She is more yours than mine, Lady ».

« She is God's » replied Our Lady », She has gone to the God, from whom she came ».

« Blessed be His Holy name for ever and for ever », said Anna, fervently.

« Your attendant is here, she looks anxious for you, will you not take the repose you so much need? »

« I will go, I will go », said the old lady, turning to thank St Mary Magdalen, who had assisted her, so quietly all through the sad scene.

When she had reached her own apartment, the servant threw her self on her knees before her, « Mistress », she said, « I do not want to tire you now, but I must say these few words, I want to be a Christian ».

« Prisca, Prisca, thank God », cried the old lady, « This is my treasure's doing ».

« I will tell you all, Lady. but not now » said the maid, tenderly commencing to assist her mistress, « my heart is very full, and I would wish to tell you how I feel for your sorrow, and ask you to rejoice in my joy ».

« We will praise and thank God, together, and bless His Holy name « said Anna, murmuring to herself « Pater Noster, qui es in coeli ».

In the meantime all had left the room where the dead lay, except our Lady, and St John who stood looking upon the body, reverently and lovingly. St John rarely appealed to Our Lady, for any token of more than ordinary knowledge, but now he turned and asked Her, « Mother, is she with God, does she see His Face? » Our Lady looked at him, and then at the corpse ; « Can you doubt it, see that look, that smile? » St Iohn looked upon the placid face, and then knelt, and buried his face in his hands, « My Master, Jesus, my Lord, Thou hast conquered over sin and death, Thou hast received Thy servant into eternal Life ».

As he knelt sweet fresh voices were heard, in the stillness of the morning, singing a simple chant which roughly translated would run something like this :

« Well for the weary;
Well for the mourners,
Well for the wayfarers here
If they think of the Heaven,
The heavenly Kingdom,
That is near ;

Oh; so very near.

« Weep not for her,
For the Angels rejoice,
O'er the one who is not with us now ;
We will pray
That her Love may soon
Place the crown upon her brow ».

St John smiled, « It is the Catechumens, who have come to prepare for the last duties to our loved little one. I hear Fabian's voice, he composed the verses, I think. They will prepare the room we used, Mother, when your little one was consecrated to God ; it has never been used since, save for the Worship of God. I have allowed them the custom of chanting hymns, and psalms, while they are performing their duties to the dead, for they have warm tender hearts, and I should not like to depress them too much ».

« You are right, my son, to inspire them with the thought that death to the Christian is the entrance to life Eternal. I am glad they are here, it was thoughtful of you to send for them. When all is prepared we may summons Anna to see the mortal remains of her, now heavenly, child. But there is yet time, and she needs repose ».

« And you, Mother, do you not need rest ? » asked St John anxiously, « May I not accompany you home, now ? » He looked pleadingly at Our Lady, for he could see how wearied she was.

« Let it be so », answered Our Lady, « I will return when you think best. Mary of Magdala and Noemi will have the honour and satisfaction of attending to our little'ones remains ; it will be a work of love to them ». St John summoned Noemi, and said, « You will remain till others come to relieve you, and perform the last offices to the body, but let it not be removed till I return, I go now to take our Mother home ».

Our Lady bent over the still form, and imprinted a kiss upon the fair brow, and then with St John quitted the room.

Down stairs they found a group of young catechu-

mens, who, if it had not been a house of mourning, would have rushed towards them, but as it was, tried to be very quiet and decorous. St John blessed them as he passed and Our Lady held out both her hands, lovingly as she said « How sweetly you sung, your chant pleased me much ».

« It was Fabian » they answered, « who composed it », and they looked towards one who seemed their elder.

« May he compose many more », said Our Lady, « Was it your Angel, who helped you » she asked.

« I did pray to my Angel » said the boy, shyly, « John the beloved, told us all to ask our Angels' help»; then seeing St John was at the further end of the apartment, he added » Lady, he is so good to us, we love him, above all who come to instruct us ».

« And you are all advancing in your instructions, and preparing to be good Christians ? » asked Our Lady « That is well, May the blessing of God be with you all », and with a sweet smile she left them.

The next morning Our Lady and St John returned, and went straight to the room, which was used as a chapel; all was prepared for the Holy Sacrifice.

Near the altar the bier was placed, on which the corpse lay, the face still surpassingly sweet, and looking as though asleep; close by was Anna's place where she could see her loved child, when she raised her bowed down head. There she sat immovable, venerable in her grief; a beautiful work of the Holy Spirit, a living model of resignation. The words, « Thy Will be done » seemed a motto, or the keynote of her life. Would that was the same with us all, and then the Creator could again look upon

this world with ineffable complacency. The catechumens had taken their place and Our Lady went to the quiet spot prepared for Her, with a place, close by for St Mary Magdalen, for St John knew well how Our Lady loved to have her near Herself.

Assisted by the Catechumens, St John commenced the adorable Sacrifice, and the customary prayers were recited for the soul of the fair little flower of the Passion; though inwardly St John was invoking her intercession feeling sure from our Lady's words that she knew she was already in Heaven.

He had asked the previous evening, rather timidly, it is true, why she had spoken as if their loved one was already in possession of the Beatific Vision, and Our Lady had not answered in prophetic language, but rather in the strain a theologian of the present day might make answer.

« She had given up all for God, not in word, but in deed and in truth, she desired martyrdom, and her desire was granted, though not in the way she imagined. She was a martyr because her whole life was sacrificed to God. Her soul was clothed with a robe of purity, through the Blood of Jesus, which had washed it to a glorious whiteness? Therefore could she join the ranks of those martyrs, who in future ages shall wash their robes in the Blood of the Lamb ».

After the Sacrifice was over all present approached to venerate the body of the Virgin of Christ, and laid various flowers upon it. One of the youths passed Our Lady, bearing a palm, it was Fabian, and Our Lady whispered to him as he passed, « You have done well to listen again to the suggestion of your angel » The co-

lour rose in the boys cheek, as he passed on to lay his palm on the body, and received as he did so, an approving smile from St. John who was kneeling near. When all had finished, St. Mary Magdalen approached softly, and laid a wreath of laurels, on the cold white brow, and then remained kneeling, with both joy and sorrow in her soul.

Gradually all in the little chapel departed, and St. John was also preparing to leave when he saw tears on St. Mary Magdalen's face. « Daughter », he said, « Weep not she is with the just in the Bosom of God. Well have you done to place that laurel wreath upon her head, for she was a conqueror; she has gained her crown, and you also, O Mary of Magdala », he continued, looking earnestly upon her, « You also are a conqueror. Upon your head will the crown of the just be placed, and on your brow the wreath of laurels and they shall write of you « She hath loved much ». She hath kept the faith, she hath fought the good fight ».

St. John knew what Mary Magdalen in her humility, did not know the beauty her soul was in the sight of God. Her repentance was a work of God, beyond our comprehension, and we should have to love like her, before we could understand her sorrow for her sin.

She looked upon the virgin form, before her, and her sorrow overflowed, warning her soul to a still more glorious whiteness; she was utterly unconscious that her repentance and the innocence of the young form before her were both works of God, equally admirable. She looked around her, she saw the Immaculate Mother, the beloved Disciple, the Holy women, the young catechumens; and she felt that all around were holy, and she was the blot

in creation: but the tale of her love and her sorrow for sin, will be told till the end of time. She is linked with her Redeemer in the minds of men, she is honoured by God's Church on earth. Who shall say, though, how she is united with her Saviour, how she is honoured by the Saints in heaven?

This age is a proud one; souls resent correction, they do not like to own they are wrong, and very often the slightest contradiction brings forth an exhibition of self-love. Ah! Mary Magdalen, the perfume of your ointment was not as sweet as the perfume of your sorrowing humble soul. Sorrow is the sweetest thing on earth, and the most beautiful. Let us strive for a humble heart, that humble contrite soul, which induces God to stoop down from his greatness and tenderly raising it up from its lowliness, press it to His Breast.

St. Mary Magdalen was Our Lady's Child, as much or more than the young virgin, whose life we have depicted. Thus we learn the Children of Mary have their different positions in God's Church; some have greater graces, some correspond with them better, but she is the Mother to all, the fervent and the indifferent, the Saint and the sinner. All must trust Her, and hear Her saying to them, « I am your Mother ».

Chapter X.

The martyr of charity.

A week had passed since Philothea's death, and Our Lady went to visit the old grandmother, whom She found very lonely; the house itself seemed lonely, for there was

a loved presence gone. Our Lady tried to console Anna, but she did not as many well meaning people do, when they are trying to comfort some one in great grief, divert their minds from it. She rather spoke to her regarding her loss, and her love. It is certain that the effort to think of some other object when the loss is very recent, does not comfort the afflicted ones. They love you, on the other hand, to listen to the little details that interest them, regarding their loved ones.

Therefore Our Lady, sat and questioned and listened attentively to all the grandmother had to say; then she heard the account of how Philothea had entered the house like a sunbeam, and lived in it like an Angel of peace, how all the slaves and domestics loved her, and how one of them wished tho become a Christian, and Anna dwelt, with great pleasure, on the fact that she had made no opposition.

« But do you know », asked Our Lady, « the cause of her last illness? »

« I do », replied the grandmother, « I was wrong to allow her to do what she did, but she pleaded so hard to be permitted to do an act of charity that I could not gainsay her. She had been to visit a poor woman, who had a baby only a few days old, and other children, with no one to look to them, and no food; it was a very bad day, cold and wet, and my dear one came hurrying back to me, with my maid, to ask if she might take food to the children and a cordial to the mother, as she was very weak. I hesitated for she was very flushed, and the weather was so bad, and asked » could not Prisca, my attendant, go, but my little one put her arms around my neck, pleaded, « Do let me, for Jesus sake, whom you love so

much, as King of Kings », here the old lady paused, and then continued « She knew how I love my Sovereign, and Lord. We are His subjects, she said, we must not fear anything in His service ».

« So I let her ago, and Oh how bitterly have I repented since. Chill and fever came on that night, and her lungs had always been delicate, and she broke a blood vessel. Shall I ever forget that sight, and my loved one lay so quiet, so sweet and happy, you would almost think she was glad. Most young people would have been frightened at the sight of so much blood, but she », the old lady's voice grew hoarse, and Our Lady took her hands in hers and bid her say no more.

« But listen to me, Anna, and I will tell you a little tale of your angel ».

The Grandmother sat still and listened like a child to Our Lady's words.

« The little one you grieve over, is now one of the « Beate », the Blessed ones in Heaven; her soul shines with a double lustre in the court of your King, Who you so love. She has her special place as virgin and martyr, and this last glory you helped her to obtain, that latter which she so much desired ».

As Our Lady spoke a look of relief, came over the grandmother's face.

« While she was on earth », continued Our Lady, « Your loved one told me how she longed to be a martyr, and shed her blood for Jesus. She was a very pure soul and it is to such as her, that God's Spirit speaks. I told her that there were martyrs, in more senses than one, and that she would be both a virgin and a martyr, and give her blood to God, by the pure intention with which

she would spend her life for His sake, and in His service. Therefore when, in her agony, I spoke to her, telling her the Bridegroom was coming for her, His Little Martyr–bride, she smiled so sweetly, for she saw how God had granted her the desire of her heart. She was a Martyr of Charity, and in this spirit she offered her life ».

« Now, I understand », said the grandmother, « This explains the happy look she wore, when weak with the loss of blood, and not allowed to speak to us, she still looked so full of joy ».

Our Lady answered, slowly and earnestly, « She was a martyr of charity, and the sacrifice is as acceptable as a martyr for the faith. Do you now regret », she asked tenderly and lovingly, « Do you now regret that you allowed her to go on that errand of charity, to poor family, even though from it came her death? »

« Ah! Lady, if you knew the load you have taken from my heart. May the day be blessed again and again that saw your birth! » and the pent up tears flowed freely as the over–charged heart was relieved.

Oh! Mother, to how many sorrowing souls hast Thou not given comfort in this world of sorrow? Sin brought us sorrow, the Immaculate one brings us joy.

Thy words ring through generation and generation and they praise thee, Mary and the God who created thee.

The united voice of the children of Christ's Church thank their Creator for thy birth into this world, they listen to thy words, Mary, Mother of Mercy and love, as thou tellest them « His Mercy is from generation unto generation ». (Luke; I; 51).

To this generation God is revealing the marvels of thy Maternal Heart. We are often sorrow–stricken, and sad, but

thy voice echoes to our souls, from the unseen world, « Come to me for I am your Mother ».

Thou art, truly, Mother, the instrument, chosen by thy Divine Son, to impress upon us His own words, « Come to me all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you ». (Matt: XI; 28).

He gives solace to so many sad soared hearts who doubt and are depressed with all around them. They distrust all, yes, all except their Mother. Jesus points to her, and tells us, « Behold Thy Mother »; and then He bids us shelter under Her mantle, inspiring souls with the thought that Christ's Mother must be the perfect Archtype of all Motherhood. Their own mothers, their earthly mothers love for them is great, they cannot doubt it, therefore they cannot doubt their Heavenly Mothers' love is greater. Whisper now a prayer to your angel, tell him you wish to be true, to serve Christ, ask Him to speak to Jesus for you and mayhap Jesus, voice will sound in the depths of your heart, telling you, « Honour the Heart of my Mother! »

We must return to Our Lady, who has fufilled her mission; She has, truly, comforted the sorrowful. From Anna's heart a load has been removed which she thought to carry to her dying day. She had borne it as bravely as human nature could, nay, poor human nature, unaided could not have borne the reproach she felt for having allowed her child to follow her heart's desire, in ministering to that poor family in such inclement weather. Anna, although her life, had never been accustomed to be weak; she had ever been upright, free from human respect, and unflinching in what she considered to be her duty. In this case she thought she had failed in her duty, and bitter, indeed was her remorse. God alone knew

what this poor old soul suffered till this visit of Our Lady's, and now her heart was much lightened, she could almost sing with joy; her relief was so great, to think she had not failed in her duty, and been punished by the death of her loved child. Her « Fiat » had been sincere; she had made it partly, in the spirit of taking a punishment which she deserved, « Fiat voluntas tua »; but now she felt she had only been instrumental in furthering the Divine Decrees, and the « Fiat voluntas tua » went up that night from a very grateful heart.

Anna of Jesus, of her King, Lord, and God, was one of the happiest beings on earth, despite her great and recent sorrow.

The Martyr of Charity! Do we think enough of what that means. Blessed Charity, virtue beloved by God! Why do we miss so many opportunities of practising it. A simple incident comes to my mind, of an act of charity, performed by those Children of Mary of which I am so proud. There was a Procession of the Blessed Sacrament, at the « Quarant'Ore », in one of our large London churches, in which the Children of Mary, walked in their blue cloaks. One of them saw a little girl refusing to walk with another, saying, « I will not walk with her, she is not nicely dressed ». Touched with pity for the poor child's confusion, vhen she reached home, this good Child of Mary, brought out one of her own dresses (I daresay she had not many to spare, for in that poor neighbourhood, they are blessed with Poverty) and sat up at night to cut up her dress to make if fit the little child. In the morning, she went to the nun, who had charge of the children of Mary, and looked to the poor of that district, and gave her the frock for the little girl. How the Angels

must have watched over that child of Mary, and blessed every stich she put in that work of love; and when the « Quarant'Ore » were over, and she walked again in the Procession, her little protege walked in front. How Our Lady must have loved that soul, so full of Charity, His beloved Virtue.

When St. Martin gave half his cloak to a poor man, Our Lord, appeared in vision, and said « Martin, though but a Catechumen has covered ME with his cloak ». The Child of Mary gave her dress to the little ragged girl, and if Our Lord did not appear, speaking of this act of Charity He nevertheless took it as done to Himself, and the Angels sang of it as they sing of many a deed, done on earth, for the love of God. They are lyrics of love, flowers and fruits of the Passion and Death of their King, Our Lord, and they sing of the grandeurs of the precious Blood.

Well for those whose deeds on earth are such that the Angels in Heaven may sing of, while they make melody before the Throne of God. Well for those whose acts can be recorded, in the Book of Life.

The little life of the Child of Our Lady, which we have been considering had nothing extraordinary about it, but it was beautiful. There are many such lives being lived on earth, at this present moment, which are beautiful in the Sight of God. Some day when, please God, we have fought the good fight, and have gained our crown, we shall lie in the Bosom of God, and looking down on the plains of earth, we shall see numberless lives being led, which leave such a lovely track of light, behind, that with the Angels, we might cry out « Quae est ista? » In the courts and allies of our great towns, in the crowded streets and silent squares Angels are every where fol-

lowing those chosen souls. We may not know them, or we may know their name and where they live and what their occupation is, but we cannot see, and do not know, the lovely sanctuary of their souls ; its very sanctity hides it.

They may even have outward peculiarities, which hide their holiness from ordinary view, but to God their souls are as an « enclosed garden », where He loves to dwell, for He rejoices, with unspeakable love over that soul in which Charity reigns.

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His Lordship the Bishop of Fiesole writes as follows: — The work entitled « The Path of Mary, » translated into Italian from the English, and which we have allowed to be printed, is redolent with the sweetness of piety, and well calculated to foster devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

Given at Fiesole, Jauuary 1st, 1903.

† DAVID, Bishop of Fiesole.

The Rev. Giulio Coppercere, Archdiocese of Florence, says: — I have received the copy of the golden little book, « The Path of Mary, » which is, indeed, a path adorned with mystic flowers, and while the soul traverses it, it is refreshed by sweet perfume of Paradise, and is raised towards that pure and serene sky, where Mary shines forth as the most loving Mother of Holy Wisdom. May Jesus Christ and His Holy Mother bless the little book, its author, and those who propagate it.

The « Path of Mary » is a sweet little book, written with admirable solidity of doctrine, and heavenly sweetness by the Mother-General of the Little Company of Mary, already noted for other publications, translated into various languages. As one gathers from the title, the authoress proposes to gently direct souls in the footsteps of Mary, so that, in the arms of such a mother, they may arrive in safety at the port of eternal salvation. Blessed are they who read and meditate on these delightful pages, which breathe forth a perfume of Paradise. The little book is preceded by a veritable jewel in the introduction by the eloquent pen of Canon Charles Falcini, Protonotary–Apostolic.

From « The Unità Cattolica, » Ftorence' 1902.

Having read several times with much pleasure and satisfaction the little work entitled, « Path of Mary, we heartily recommend it to the faithful of our diocese. It appears to us to be a faithful and devout exposition of the « True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin » of the Venerable Grignon de Monfort a devotion which has received the sanction of the Church, and is full of spiritual graces.

† EDWARD, Bishop of Nottingham.

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« Dublin Review, » October, 1878.

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« Dublin Review » October, 1883.

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† EDWARD, Bishop of Nottingham.

Christmas Eve, 1883.

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The Rev. H. M. Walker.

Kenilworth, 1881.

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The late Father T. Armellini, S. J., Rome, writes: — I have read with satisfaction of heart and mind, the work entitled « Spiritual Maternity ». Concise without obscurity, and very comprehensive, it does not neglect any of the essential points to be held in view by a Religious Superior. It is theoretically correct and practically safe in guiding Superiors apart from rigorism and laxity, to genuine religious perfection. While enlightening their minds, it speaks to their hearts, offering to them an object of fruitful meditation. Its perusal is sufficient to recommend it to intelligent and sensible readers.

October 21st, 1894.

I consider the instructions on « Spiritual Maternity » to be in harmony with Catholic doctrine, and with the spirit of the most approved writers on religious perfection, and very well adapted to the end in view. They cannot fail, I hope and pray, to produce much salutary fruit for the individual sanctification of those to whom they are addressed, and those confided to their care. May the Holy Spirit, without whom all our efforts would be useless, accompany them by His Grace, and make them fruitful for the great end to which they are directed.

† T. KIRBY, Archbishop of Ephesus.

Irish College, Rome, October 10th. 1894.

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THE AFFILIATED 0 1

I have read the little book of « the Affiliated », and have found it very edifying. It breathes a very tender devotion to our Blessed Lady, and is well suited to inspire similar devotion in others. I trust that by the aid of Divine Grace it will promote the work which you have so much at heart, and increase in the number of Mary's clients, and an increase in childlike love for her.

† MICHAEL, CARDINAL LOGUE.

Ara Coeli, Armagh 7th, 1900.

I warmly approve of the recommendation that the living should offer up prayers and good works for the dying, and that they should thus co-operate with the Little Company of Mary, whose special end is to help Catholics to make a good death.

† HERBERT, CARDINAL VAUGHAN.

February 26th, 1900.

We have read with great pleasure the little book of « The Affiliated », written by the Mother-General of « The Little Company of Mary », and we most willingly recommend it to be read and widely diffused, particularly among those who are drawn to greater piety, for it aims at infusing the spirit with which the Most Pure Heart of Mary was filled, the spirit of the highest holiness and perfection, and increasing the love of her Most Sorrowful Heart, from which devotion his Holiness Pope Leo XIII., expected great fruit throughout the world, in these times of so much sorrow and corruption. The Heart of Mary after that of Jesus is the fount of every grace, to which we must have recourse to be saved. And what this most tender Heart desires us to be, we easily learn from this little book.

† P., Archbishop.

Malta, 29th September, 1799.

I most willingly associate myself with the various members of the Catholic Hierarchy, who have added to their approval such strong terms of commendation of the little book termed « The Affiliated, » and written by the Reverend Mother-General of the « Little Company of Mary ».

Filled as it is at every page with the spirit of love for the Mother of God, and of self-sacrifice for the neighbour's good, it cannot but infuse into the hearts of its readers some of the same spirit, which is indeed that of the entire Sisterhood of which the authoress is the head.

I therefore cordially recommend this little work to the faithful under my jurisdiction.

† H. MAC SHERRY, Bishop, Vicar-Apost. of Eastern Cape Colony.

Port Elizabeth, Cape of Good Hope, Nov. 13th, 1902.

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